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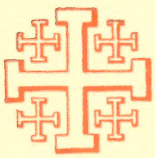
Hassan: a Fellah

A Romance of Palestine

By

Henry Gillman

Author of "Marked for Life," "The Ancient Men of the Great Lakes," etc.



Boston

Little, Brown, and Company

1898

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University Press:
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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, LL.D.

THE SCHOLAR, THE STATESMAN, THE ORATOR.

Hassan: a Fellah

CHAPTER I

"I SHALL wait till she returns," he said. "My hope is as the first-fruits in harvest. My heart is lifted up for joy because of her. Surely love comes of its own accord! How can a man help it? Who shall say it nay?" And he settled himself with a complacent air under the shelter of a great rock, in a position from which he could watch his sheep while they cropped the early and still meagre herbage of the hillside.

Below, in the hollow of the valley, was the principal well of the village, to which the women, from long distances, came to draw water; for the well was noted for the abundance and purity of its supply of the precious liquid. And the words which the stalwart young shepherd had spoken to himself had reference to a childlike girl who had just tripped by, with nicely-balanced kulleh, or water-jar, on head, on her way to the ain, or fountain.

The young man, Hassan, his shepherd's crook in his hand, sat partly in the shade of the rock, partly in the clear penetrating blaze of the Palestine sun, and, except that he was of unusually noble stature, was a perfect type of the native fellah or peasant.

He had not quite completed his eighteenth year, and was as handsome, after his kind, as he well could be. The single scanty garment of the country, of coarse white cotton, clung here and there to him, barely saving him from the divine nudity of a Greek statue. On the right side the polished round of the shoulder protruded; and from there, downward, over the well-turned flank and thigh, to the tip of the toe, the full sweep of his contour was absolutely beyond criticism.

It gladdened the heart to see so much perfection in a man.

The almost uniform equality of the fine bronze of his skin told of his habitual disregard of dress. His head, for the time being without any other covering than its thickly-clustering raven-black hair, was bent slightly forward, the chin resting on his right hand. His dark hazel eyes looked out confidently from under the pair of strongly accentuated curves — narrow black dashes — that formed his brows, and which seemed like marks of attention inviting to the inspection of his beauty.

The dress, doubtless, was similar to that worn by David as he kept the sheep of his father Jesse — a dress sanctioned by the usage of scores upon scores of generations of the men of the country. To-day the unbreeched peasant of Palestine, free of all constraint, immodestly innocent of all shame in his state of semi-nudity, goes his way in unconfined liberty of heart and limb, wearing the vesture that Abraham wore, and with the motion and action of a lord of creation. Habit and custom are everything; and no offence is taken where none is meant.

No raiment, to be dress at all, could certainly be less conventional. But it had its advantages. It was suited to the climate and the people, and its very simplicity made it graceful, and permitted full and wholesome ventilation of all parts of the body. Its longest sweep reached little below the knee; and, as occasion required, it could be tucked up and rendered much shorter. If it had the stains of the outdoor life upon it, the odour of the pasture also clung about it; and, as old Isaac said, it had "the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed."

For cold weather, and morning and evening wear, was the heavy brown and white striped abai, woven of camel's or goat's hair. This was waterproof, and a perfect protection from the storm; and, wrapped in it, a man could sleep comfortably out-of-doors all night. And peasants, and especially shepherds, as the season demanded, also often might be seen in a short coat or jacket formed of sheepskin, the woolly side turned in or next the body.

It was plain that Hassan's attention was more than divided from the care of his sheep by his interest in the young girl. He watched her every motion with appreciative glance and an earnest feeling that was not the growth of a day. Frequently, on other occasions, had he followed her with ardent gaze, and finding out the hours at which she was wont to pass by, of late had managed to pasture his sheep, at such times, near to the way she went.

So far, he had not ventured to speak to her; though, more than once, he had made up his mind to the act.

Even a simple peasant has a peculiar reserve, shamefacedness, or diffidence under such circumstances; and the habits and customs of the land, even in the country parts, are not friendly to very familiar intercourse on the part of the opposite sexes.

With the Moslem in cities, and among the Turks, of course, nothing of the kind is ever permitted; a man not even being allowed to see his wife till the night of the wedding, or the morning after their marriage.

That this last is the prevailing custom in the Orient, is well known; and how long it has kept a foothold there is fully attested by the story of Jacob and Leah, and the sharp practice of Laban on the wedding night. But the peasant in his village has, under certain limits and restraints, much greater freedom in this respect, and from necessity; the seclusion of women, as practised in cities and towns, being out of the question in the country. Neither do the women go with face veiled in the latter, as they invariably do in the former. A common saying with the men, who do not mince matters in expressing themselves on the subject, is: "How does anybody know whether the thing which is behind the curtain be handsome or ugly?" which sufficiently explains their position.

However, in the case of Hassan, the young shepherd, there existed other reasons of restraining influence.

The girl resided in a village only a short distance from his; but between the two villages had existed, from time immemorial, a blood-feud which, though it had had its origin in a cause long since forgotten, still perpetuated

itself in many dissentient customs and a general unfriendly feeling between the communities. Intermarriage was prohibited, and whenever, under some peculiar circumstances, such an event took place, it was made the occasion to stir up, from the very depths, the old rancour and its antiquated observances.

Of late years, it must be admitted, there had been, to a certain extent, a relenting from the worst phases of the senseless enmity. But that it should be altogether laid aside was not to be thought of. There is a cruel adherence to custom in the Orient, which is scarcely to be believed by those who never have resided there.

Hassan had not inaptly been called "the handsome young giant." This grand young man, of noble form and mien, physically a masterpiece, and in the full perfection of his manhood while yet in his eighteenth year, was a descendant of those tall Canaanites of the hill-country, who, in the days of the Hebrew invasion of the land, struck such terror into the hearts of the children of Israel. He was a son of Anak, though the fact had been unknown to him and to those among whom he dwelt, — lost in the misty trackless past.

"Who can stand before the children of Anak?" It had become a proverb more than three thousand years ago. They were described as giants; and the nomadic Hebrews, though toughened from their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, had wept cowardly tears as they shuddered at the thought of encountering those high and mighty men of the hills.

"The people is taller and greater than we," they cried, and they wanted to turn back into Egypt. "We have seen the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

It was a strange coincidence that an Englishman, a traveller of note, who had met Hassan while yet a lad, and was attracted by his tall stature and fine build, unusual in one of his age, had called him "a son of Anak" and given him the name of Talmai, with reference to the individual of that name, who, at the time of the visit of Caleb and the Spies, was a chief or prince

of the Anakim, living near Hebron, and nigh to the Brook Eshcol, which was even then, as we know, celebrated for the superior quality of its grapes, figs, and pomegranates, as it is unto this day.

As in the case of many other usages, certain names have a decided permanency among certain tribes of the people of Palestine; and the Englishman, aware of this, and observing that Hassan smiled, saying he liked the name well, for it had been his father's and his father's father's name, made direct investigations. He found, among other interesting facts, that Hassan and his people were from the hill-country, not far from Hebron, which stimulated further research, — the result being that he finally became fully persuaded in his own mind that the lusty youth was a descendant of the Anakim.

True, the ancient record states, as he was aware, that the Anakim were cut off utterly in the mountains of Judah, on the incoming of the Israelites. But he considered all such sweeping statements must be taken with a grain of salt — require qualification; and Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod are particularly excepted from the extermination. Now Gath, the City of Giants, was in the hill-country, and nearly four hundred years after this extermination was still the abode of the Philistines, and sent out, to defy Israel, a notable giant in the person of Goliath, whom David slew. Moreover, subsequently, did not King David take as one of his many wives the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur, who bore him his handsome, faithless, but well-beloved son Absalom?

It, however, must be added that Hassan gave little heed to anything of this, as connected with himself, regarding the matter with almost sublime indifference.

As the girl, on her return from the ain, approached, bearing on her shoulder the heavy water-jar, Hassan arose and stood upright, filled with the determination he had formed to speak to her.

It was an impulse he could no longer resist. Day after day it had grown upon him; and now, with the fatalism of the East, he felt the time had come. Advancing a few steps to meet her, he waited by the pathway where she must pass.

He had resumed his head-covering, a tarboosh of somewhat faded crimson with blue silk tassel, and surrounded with turban-like cloth of white, banded with stripes of a dead-gold colour.

It was astonishing to one unaccustomed to it to see the ease and rapidity with which he wound this cloth into the turban shape around his head. A few deft turns of the hand, and it was done, the end passed beneath the folds securing all in place.

Standing thus, ready to receive her, his crook resting against his shoulder, he must have presented a strong likeness to the youth of fair countenance, afterwards known as the shepherd-king, and the man after God's own heart, — the sweet singer of Israel, who so many centuries ago had tended sheep on these very mountain-sides, and who was the result of more than one intermarriage with the people of the land.

The fresh breeze, rushing through the valley and up the slopes, no respecter of persons, and no aider and abetter of prudery, at each gust, lightly swept aside his loosely-hanging raiment, more fully revealing his perfect form. He had thrust his feet into his sandal-like slippers, as a protection from the sharp stones. How large and lustrous his eyes looked! How bright the red of his full lips, beneath his dark mustache! His crispy, almost wiry hair, a characteristic of the people, was now concealed beneath his tarboosh, all but a luxuriantly defiant tuft which ravishingly protruded in front. An unusual glow lighted and warmed his olive cheek.

Yes, he was an uncommonly handsome man, — "fearfully and wonderfully made," as the Scripture has it, — a noble representative descendant of the most ancient people of the land, even the Canaanites, as they generically had been named from their country, which was called Canaan.

There was not the least expression of shame or embarrassment on the part of the young girl as the two met. He saluted her with the easy, almost princely manner of the Oriental, raising his hand with the usual elegant gesture to his breast, lips, and forehead.

"Niharak-saïd — Good morning," he said. "Will the

damsel give me to drink? The water is spent in my bottle, and I am famished with thirst."

The lover spoke in his every word and action; for, except in the case of aged women, men are not expected to salute members of the opposite sex.

"Thou art very welcome," she replied, and prepared to lower the jar, in which act he assisted her.

It is considered almost inhuman to refuse any one a draught of water.

Having stooped, and satisfied his thirst, he thanked her, repeating rapidly, in a single sweep, the courteous gesture of hand to breast, lips, and forehead. Their eyes met. They were face to face.

This was what he had looked forward to, these many days. And yet it came to him as a glad surprise.

How it warmed and quickened his blood! A soft, yet what might be considered a somewhat familiar smile, and an expression of great satisfaction, parted his full lips, revealing two dazzling rows of perfect, pearly teeth.

To this, ever so slight a response was elicited on her part; and she prepared to replace the jar upon her shoulder. But in this he gently interrupted her.

"I have somewhat to say to thee."

"Say on," she replied.

"Thou dost pass here very often."

"Every day."

"I have watched thee coming and going, and have wanted to speak to thee, and ask thee to give me of the water to quench my thirst; but I did not make bold to detain thee."

"I have seen thee tending thy sheep," was her simple response.

Her eyes were now cast down, very modestly; and she partly concealed her face with her white headdress.

"Yes," he said, "I tend the sheep here. And — and," reverting to the former topic — the subject at heart — "I see thee coming for water to the ain — the fountain. And — and I should like to help thee."

"It is not necessary or fitting my lord should trouble himself to do that."

"Oh, it is no trouble! I should not mind doing it for

thee, and much more than that, even if it were a trouble."

At this her great luminous eyes turned on him a questioning, penetrating glance; but she said nothing.

"I have been inquiring about thee," he resumed; "and I have found that, like me, thou art an orphan — without father and mother."

"It is true. I am an orphan."

"We should be good friends, then," he said. "We ought to be very kind to each other."

A hesitating, somewhat startled look crossed her face.

"I live at Malha," she simply answered.

"I know it."

"And thou at Bettîr," she added, as though that settled the question.

"Plenty of water at Bettîr; thou hast not to go far to draw it," was his diplomatic and significant remark, intended to suggest certain possibilities, and divert her attention.

How like a child she looked; and in mere years she was little better than a child. She was almost fifteen, so that there was about three years' difference in their ages; but in Palestine, where men marry in their early teens, and women at a still earlier age, and where grandmothers of little more than twenty may be found, — to all intents and purposes, he was a man and she a woman. The Oriental is a precocious animal.

Meanwhile, she had replenished his porous water-bottle from her jar, restoring to the former the wisp of straw with which it was stopped — a convenient but poor substitute for cork.

His various little devices for detaining her were at length exhausted. It was not well they should be seen together. She began to show her anxiety to depart; and as she had quite a distance to traverse, and most of it steep climbing, up the slopes of the rocky tell, he felt it best not to delay her longer.

Yet, though he considered it hardly prudent, he could not resist walking beside her for a short distance on her return, after having restored her water-jar to her shoulder.

Though their hearts kindled within them as they talked by the way, their words were few.

"Is it not well, Hilwe?" he asked proudly. "I care not for the blood-feud. I have nothing to do with it. And though all the rest of the people in the two villages should be enemies, I am determined we shall be good friends. Shall we not always be friends?"

Hilwe looked down, half afraid.

"Yea, yea. Shall it not be so?" he reiterated. "Shall it not be well?"

To this her only reply was a smile lighting up every feature. But it was answer enough for him.

They were now within the borders of the territory of Malha.

He saw he must return.

With a full heart he said courteously: "Khaterak — By thy leave or pleasure," the customary expression before taking departure.

Indeed, it was time for him to attend to his sheep, and gather them together, for they had become widely scattered, as is wont for sheep without the shepherd.

"Thou hast a rough way to go, up the steep tell," he said, glancing up the heights.

"Yea. But thou hast made it smooth," she replied.

As he turned away from her, softly fell from her lovely lips that most beautiful expression in the Arabic — the good-bye or farewell: "Ma'-es-salameh." This is literally "With peace," and means, "Go in peace," or "Peace abide with thee." He thought he had never heard it sound so sweetly, yet so sadly.

"Allah yasellamak — May Allah give thee peace," he replied. "Rightly art thou named Hilwe. Thou art indeed sweet."

This was in accordance with the Moslem custom, which enjoins that in returning a good wish you must heighten or increase it, or wish something better.

He more than once turned to look after her, as she moved with even pace over the hilly way, steadily balancing her water-jar.

"She is like a gazelle of the mountain," he murmured to himself. "My soul yearns for her as the parched land

for the rain. Allah be merciful to her, and bless her."
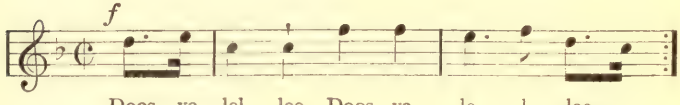
And now he had to turn his attention to his truant sheep.

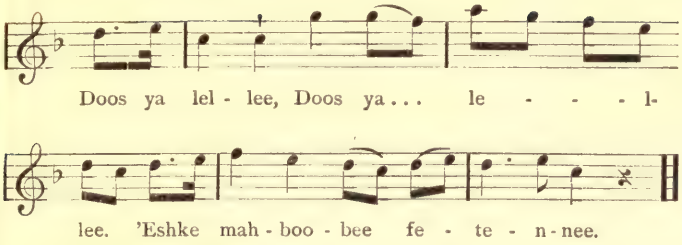
They sorely needed his care, and were scattered widely apart, in all directions, and where they ought not to be. But as soon as he gave his peculiar cry or call, every sheep raised its head, recognising his voice; and, going before them, he led them into fresh and green pastures.

It was an actual realisation of the old psalm. It was the putting into action the words of the Great Teacher in describing the Good Shepherd: "The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. . . . He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."

And this beautiful sight is one which may be seen, to this hour, any day in Palestine. A hundred memories and gentle impulses are stirred as one sees the great flocks of sheep, accompanied by their black and more briskly-moving comrades, the goats, feeding up and down, among the huge out-cropping rocks of the hillside, with the alert, faithful shepherd caring for them, and leading them "in the way they should go."

Hassan was wonderfully elated now, as he went before his flock, playing on his reed pipe or nayÿ, calling to the sheep and guiding them. He soon had them all collected and feeding together; and, in the fulness of his soul, he broke out into singing one of the weird minor-like strains of Palestine, set in one of those crude, primitive scales of indefinite tonality which we, long ago, have passed beyond, and have left far behind. It was an archaic lyric, without any beauty of melody to the unaccustomed ear, yet full of untold pathos and heart-stirring associations to the native.





"Leap, O my joy! Leap, O my joy!" (repeated)
"Ardent desire of my beloved hath involved me in earnest."

Everything seemed to stop to listen as he sang. "Doos ya lellee! Doos ya lellee!" How seductively the refrain rang out at the close of each stanza! How far the clear air carried the sound! It was startling.

The hollows and rocky caverns echoed and re-echoed the rude barbaric notes, as though they were familiar accents, akin to them, to which they responded with friendly utterance. The sheep, too, sympathising with their master's happiness, which they well understood as expressed in those impassioned resonant tones, fed all the more contentedly; while Hassan walked like a king among them, singing in deeper and louder outbursts, and as if the music had stimulated him and exalted his spirit to the most exhilarated pitch.

And thus he sang:

"By Allah, I am inflamed with intense love!
The lover, surely, is not to be blamed:
How can he hold back his eager heart?
How can he stay himself from loving?

The black eyes have overthrown me.
The lips red as pomegranate have betrayed me.
From love of them I began to sing,
And the song hath increased my madness.

Unite me to my true love, one night,
And if the beloved of my heart come to me,
I will bring her to my mother's house,
I will make the cashmere shawl her canopy.

The crew of reproachers leagued together
To debar me from my beloved.
By Allah, I will not relinquish my love,
Though with swords they should cut me in pieces!

Up with me, O true love! Let us delight ourselves
Under the shade of the jasmine:
We will pluck the peach from its mother,
While the reproachers are unconscious.

O ye beautiful ones, fear God!
And have mercy on the lover for the sake of God.
The love of the fair is ordained by Him:
Allah hath decreed it against me."

Then he changed to another and more plaintive native melody. This was more positively minor than the former, and abounded in that remarkable peculiarity of Eastern music — the division of tones into thirds — something unknown to European music, which has no finer division than semitones. These Orientals, spite of their archaic scales, have a nice discriminative ear.

Hilwe still heard him in the distance, and thrilled to the sound, moving with gladdened step. She recognised the well-known air — the song of a bridegroom searching for his missing bride.

Perhaps it was the original, or, if not that, an echo of Solomon's ancient "Love-Song," in its simple unaffected declaration:

"In the night I arose and sought my beloved.
I sought her whom my soul loveth —
I sought my bride, but I found her not.
My life is wasted without her."

The strains, the very notes, belonged to the people and the country. They were born of the environment, were its outcome, its creation.

Besides those imperfect primitive scales of indefinite tonality, already referred to, and other as strange peculiarities of the music, there is no doubt that the language itself, differing in many respects from pure Arabic, has suggestive indications of similar import; and has preserved and requires certain organs of vocalisation wanting in the European. It seems impossible for the latter to

produce exactly some of the more characteristic sounds of the Arabic, which seem a survival of prehistoric times, and originally to have been derived from the lower animals. It is significant that examples of onomatopœia are most numerous in primitive tongues.

Hassan had an unusually full deep voice for an Oriental. For, with all their pronounced virility, these people frequently have a high, weak voice, almost falsetto, and speak in a minor key. Close observers have said that even the cries of the animals in the East are all in this minor key. The natives themselves call the Arabic the language of the camel, from its peculiar guttural tones. It is curious to find fully-developed, stalwart men with querulous, high-keyed, whining voices, and totally lacking the chest tones of the European, in whom they are quick to notice the opposite characteristics and depth of voice, which they sometimes, in ridicule, mimic, as gruff and overbearing.

In this, and in a few other points, Hassan differed from the ordinary fellaheen. But his greatest difference was in what they themselves would call his more civilized manners. Nor did they always intend this in a complimentary sense.

Hassan, on the present occasion, had other auditors, unknown to him and out of sight — three members of that terrorising branch of the mounted police known as zaptiehs, who had stopped at the well to water their horses. One of the group, though the youngest, was evidently an officer, for he wore the undress or fatigue uniform of an aga or captain of zaptiehs, and his companions addressed him as Kiamil Aga. He was a soldierly, well-developed young man, with clean-cut limbs, and regular features. Alas, those regular features are too often a mask behind which hides much irregularity!

The plaintive strains of the music touched a sympathetic chord in the breast of the aga, absorbing his attention. While his mind was thus diverted, the women who had drawn water and filled the stone trough for the horses, silently and rapidly disappeared.

"Why, where are the women?" he cried, when he turned and missed them.

"They have departed."

"How so?"

"They know thee, Aga."

At this familiar reply of one of the men, the aga, instead of being offended, burst out laughing.

"It is more likely they know thee," he presently retorted.

The man, however, modestly declined the honour attributed to him.

"But to whom are we indebted for the music?" asked the captain.

"Ah! some fellah with his sheep, on the other side of the hill."

"And is he sad or happy?"

"Oh, happy! Why, that is a love-song, Aga."

"A love-song! And does the man satisfy his love in that way?"

"Partly, Aga."

"Assad, thou knowest entirely too much for thine own good. But, come; to saddle! Let us mount. The horses have had all the water they want. We are due in Jerusalem early to-day, remember, and have no time to lose."

As they turned into a bend in the road, Hassan caught sight of them.

"There go the zaptiehs," he said, as he stopped singing. "I warrant they have been up to some mischief. To expect pity from them is like begging a husband from a widow."

CHAPTER II

IT now may be necessary to state that, when little more than a mere boy, Hassan had once acted as a muleteer to a party of English and American tourists travelling through the Holy Land. One of these strangers, the wife of an American gentleman, on whom Hassan was especially deputed to wait, took so overweening a fancy to the bright, handsome lad, who

had been so polite, attentive and kind to her throughout the journey, that, not satisfied with giving him a generous present over and above his pay, she persuaded her husband to make inquiries respecting him, with the object of having him educated.

The result was that, for three or four years, Hassan was sent to one of the schools kept by the missionaries in Jerusalem. There was the less obstruction offered to this, from the fact that, though a Moslem, he was an orphan, and the pressure was not exerted which otherwise would have been brought to bear upon him through his parents, had he had such, by zealous and fanatic Mohammedans, who usually look upon such education as a species of proselytising; though it must be confessed that, as to the effect produced, there is little or nothing whatsoever to sustain any such opinion.

As is well known, the conversion of a Moslem to Christianity is an almost unheard-of event. It is nearly as rare as angel visits; far rarer than the apparent conversions from Judaism. Indeed, the convert from Mohammedanism, if such there were, would not, in all probability, be suffered to live many days after the fact of his conversion became public. He would be promptly dealt with by the fanatic Islamites.

Any one attempting to assert contrary to this in Jerusalem would not only not be credited, but would be laughed to scorn.

In Hassan's case, at least, not much change in a religious sense was to be noticed. Perhaps it was not to be expected. Indeed, it was stipulated he should not be interfered with in his belief, and that he should be allowed to keep the Mohammedan fasts and feasts, such as the Ramadan, Bairam, etc. If such was the shape of things with him within the walls of the Christian school, it could scarcely be supposed that after withdrawal from its influence he would be found lapsing from the Moslem faith.

At the close of those three or four years of instruction, the payments of his American friend ceasing, Hassan was promptly dismissed from the school, and relegated back into his former life.

After a vain struggle to find employment in the Holy City, he naturally fell back on Bettîr, and resumed his old life there.

He could now read and write as well as speak Arabic, and had some knowledge of the French language, as well as of the English branches in general, including arithmetic. The sheik of the village found him useful in keeping for him the accounts of the tithes and taxes, and Hassan's employment in this field gave him a certain position of importance, though an unenviable one, as it roused an inevitable jealousy and animosity against him. His chief employment, however, was his former one of keeping sheep; and he, perhaps too easily, dropped back into it and his old ways, once more.

There was something inexpressibly fascinating and natural to him in lying under the canopy of heaven, day after day, watching and guarding his sheep. To feel the fresh breezes laden with the smell of the pasture sweep over him was in itself a delight. The free, untrammelled life, in general unburdened with very hard work, was suited to his temperament.

Even the simple change of dress — back into the loose easy-fitting raiment, was a grateful relief. In the school he had been put into the European coat and trousers, and in this attire he seemed quite another individual. Almost in the flash of an eye he cast his shell, and what a metamorphosis! He was a different animal, it seemed. But it was only the old Hassan, again come to life.

The principal relief, however, was the emancipation from the control of others and once more being, to a great extent, under his own control. No man is inherently or by inclination a slave; and the life which is subservient to the whims, caprices, and, in short, the will of others, is, no matter what we may say, more or less in slavery.

And now we have him, as we first beheld him, the child of Nature; changed somewhat by his late moulding, it is true; yet, though quickened in his intellect by the education and experience he had received among those Christians and Europeans in Jerusalem, dropped

back completely into the life of the peasant, and, to all outward appearances, in every respect a fellah of Palestine.

In meeting Hassan, the young girl Hilwe had naturally looked upon him as her superior. This is the invariable habit of the country, where even an old woman will kiss the hand of a mere boy with reverence, addressing him as "my lord," simply because he is a male and she a female. But successive meetings gradually mitigated the constraint of this high respect; and Hilwe soon began to come in contact with Hassan with but little of the reserve and shyness characterising her first meeting with him.

It was Nature triumphing over custom and artificially-cultured habit. Hilwe was too young, and of too free-born a spirit to have accepted many of those cramping institutions with ease or patience. And though she lived in or among them, to a certain extent it might be said that she was not of them.

Week after week, Hassan managed to pasture his sheep at certain times each day near to the path she would be obliged to pass. This, indeed, as we have seen, he had done long before he had summoned courage and found opportunity to speak to her.

On the day succeeding that first meeting, Hilwe expected that, on her return from the fountain, he would again speak to her, and she was not disappointed. It cannot be denied it was with something more than mere satisfaction she saw him, as she approached, leave his sheep and draw near to the pathway.

There were the inevitable salutations and good wishes, followed by the request for water.

"Give me to drink."

This time the words were spoken by him in a more confident accent, and with a certain air of familiarity partly assumed for the occasion; and were followed by her more than willing compliance.

There was something wonderfully pleasing to her in being able to satisfy the wants of this comely strong young man of heroic build, her acknowledged superior,

and that he should be dependent on her in anything — even to allay his thirst.

As he stooped and drank, she stood, respectfully silent, watching him. She felt glad at heart for his sake that the water was so sweet and cool.

Their looks were like a conversation; and were more than words.

He raised his head and thanked her, touching his hand to his forehead in the usual — indeed, never-omitted — graceful acknowledgment.

She lifted her eyes, at first timidly, then trustfully.

His glance shot through her with all the assured dominance of the male; yet Hilwe did not lower her gaze, but with native confidence let him look upon her.

The woman naturally is made to comply or yield. Every action of the man towards her requires this of her. It is the result of a combination of facts, moral and physical. But in the East all this is especially accentuated.

"Taieeb — Good. The water is cool," he said; "and all the sweeter for coming from thy hand."

"I am well pleased thou findest it so," she replied.

"God the most merciful be praised for sending thee to me. Surely, beautiful are the feet of those who bring peace and comfort."

He spoke with a pleasant warmth. Though he was a man, rather because he was a man, he could not help but feel the glad reactive influence of her great, miraculous eyes, almost startling in their mysterious beauty, as they held him with a fascination that he could not resist — that he did not wish to resist, and which was the outgrowth of their mutual feeling.

As they two, Hassan and Hilwe, stood together on the lonely hillside, it was impossible not to notice how handsome they were. They seemed made for each other; and they knew it. Love had told them.

The slopes were purple with thyme, in full flower, sweetening the air; and all was so still around them they could hear the low soft soughing of the wind through the grass, like the pulse of Nature, and the

buzz of the little brown, yellow-banded Syrian bee, as it flew from blossom to blossom, probing each to its depths for its ravished nectar which it carried off to store in some rocky cavity near by. Except these gentle murmurs and the occasional bleating of a sheep, few other sounds reached them in that secluded place. These two children of the land seemed to grow out of the scene, and to belong peculiarly to it, — like the primeval man and woman in the untilled wilderness, the ancient Eden which they called a garden or paradise, as well they might.

But if Hassan felt those warm influences control him, how much more so was this the case with Hilwe!

She had spoken truly when she had said to him, in her simple language, "I have seen thee tending thy sheep."

She had never passed below him, in the winding path, that her eyes had not instinctively been attracted by the well-favoured young shepherd, stretched at full length upon the ground, or standing erect, straight as an arrow, outlined against the sky, watching his flock from some prominent crag.

It was only to be expected that his image should leave its impression upon her.

And now they were alone together, face to face, once more.

Something of the first shyness, it is true, still lingered with them, and held them in a certain reserve. But behind this the warmer feelings gathered and strengthened, as a stream gathers to a great body of water and an overwhelming force behind the restraining dam.

Hassan's clear hazel eyes swept with searching glance the entire range of landscape. There was no one in sight. This gave him courage. He stretched out his hand to her, which she took, after having enveloped hers in a part of her flowing raiment; an old custom, a mark of respect; for with the Moslems, punctilious etiquette says a woman is unclean, and must not touch a man with her naked hand.

"Hilwe," he said, "I have been thinking of thee

ever since thou spakest to me yesterday. I have been watching for thee. But I began to fear thou wast not coming this morning."

"Yes; I am late. I have had much of which thou knowest not to delay me. Fatima, my uncle's wife, giveth me more and more to do each day."

She had drawn before her mouth some of her drapery while speaking to him, a further mark of respect and of modesty, and as is commonly the custom with Mohammedan women when addressing men, even when well acquainted with them.

"I wish thou wouldst let me go with thee, each time, and help thee to draw the water."

He spoke with downcast eyes, in thoughtful mood, knowing the prejudice.

"No, no; that must not be. It would not be proper; and it would only make trouble. Besides, I do not mind it. It is nothing to me to draw the water. I am accustomed to it."

Under the strength of his emotions all the grace of the man awoke and projected itself from him. It was an immeasurable power. Whether standing motionless before her, or, in the energy of his feeling, unconsciously shifting his weight, first to one foot, then to the other, or suddenly advancing a step or two upon her, all was grace, — the natural outcome of the beauty that was in him, — something which cannot be taught by the fencing-master or drill-sergeant, and which no instructor in deportment ever yet imparted.

This time, it was evident, Hilwe was in no hurry to replace her water-jar and go her way. Standing opposite to this strong, genial young man, of such generous proportions, who spoke to her so pleasantly, what wonder if she was beguiled, moment after moment, into delaying?

"Fatima will scold anyway," she thought, "and if I am a little late, what matters it?"

How she loved to hear him speak! His voice stirred her. But she must not let him perceive it.

"It is time I were returning," she said, to keep up appearances.

"Oh, wait a little longer!" he pleaded, stepping between her and the water-jar, which she apparently would have raised.

It did not require much persuasion from his lips to detain her. Already she felt the power of his attraction, and resigned herself submissively, for she longed to be with him. She basked in his fervent presence as the storm-drenched bird basks in the sunshine, finding there comfort and pleasure.

There are probably few if any people in whom the differentiation of sex is more marked than it is in the Syrian. If Hassan had one characteristic more pronounced than another, it was his masculine vitality. In him his sex was intensified. He impressed you with the superabundance of his manliness. He was distinctively adorned with it, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and from his very centre to his surface, all over. Life, virile life, seemed to breathe out of him — ray out of him in a surrounding halo or aroma, like the aureola from a saint. There was a freshness, a fulness, and a force of this sexualisation of the life-principle in him which made itself felt on all who came in contact with him. In civilised society he would have been called uncommonly prepossessing, and a man to fall in love with at first sight.

But now he was endowed with even a higher and more enthralling charm. Love, the great beautifier, had him in hand, and was leading him whither he would, and making him all-glorious within and without, or as some, perhaps, would say — making a great fool of him.

The "showing off" of a man under the eyes of the woman he loves is a phenomenon of the notable and instructive kind. This "love display" is seen throughout the animal kingdom, in bird and reptile as well as in beast, and man is no exception. It is, doubtless, to some extent, an unconscious act, nature suggesting and stimulating; and we behold the debonair grace, the gallant posturising, the exquisite strut, and the sumptuous apparelling, without the full recognition of the

honest, amorous ardour of which they are the outcome or exponents. There is nothing either wrong or unnatural in all this. It is God's gift. It is as simple as breathing.

Within the last few weeks Hassan had undergone this beautifying change. He had experienced this wonderful awakening.

As, day after day, he beheld the young girl pass on her errands, near by, the work was accomplished. Her image was burnt in upon his soul; and he felt he must possess her — must have her for his own. In the sudden expansion and glow that came upon him, he was lifted up into a new existence. All obstacles and impediments vanished in the presence of the one fact, his imperious desire.

All her simple ways, her little doings and slightest movements were known to him and studied by him, so far as he could know and study them under the restricting circumstances.

In polite life it would have been pronounced a case of infatuation.

But, whatever might be said on the subject, whatever criticism might be made on it by some who from their higher civilisation look down on the emotions and acts of those they might be pleased to consider a semi-barbarous man and woman, it must certainly be admitted there was nothing vulgar about it. Nature is never vulgar.

"Hilwe, thou wouldst have no trouble drawing water at Bettîr."

Hassan spoke in a subdued tone and with a slight hesitation.

Hilwe understood his meaning, but made no reply.

"There is abundance of water there, and near at hand," he continued, warming with his subject. "There are living fountains of water bursting out of the rock; and gardens of delight, as fine as King Suleyman's at Urtas, below the three great pools, — the vast tanks the wise king made to water his paradise, — yes, and finer, full of all manner of fruits and herbs. Beautiful trees, such as walnut and mulberry, are plentiful;

pomegranates, apricots, figs, almonds, peaches and pears abound; and there are many olive-groves and vineyards."

"I know it is a pleasant place; but — "

A perplexed, almost troubled look crossed Hilwe's face as she paused.

"How happy we should be there!" he proceeded, as if not noticing her anxious expression. "I would do everything for thee — everything to make thee comfortable and contented."

In the monotony of the peasant life there is a sameness in the topics and in the forms of conversation which seems a necessary consequence of the simple existence.

"Thou dost not speak, Hilwe. Thou needst not be afraid of me. Dost thou not believe me? Dost thou think I would treat thee badly?"

"I am not afraid of thee; I think not that thou wouldst ill-treat me; but I am ashamed to tell thee all."

"What dost thou mean?" he asked, with some token of impatience.

"The Thar — the blood-feud," was her brief reply.

"The Thar. I care nothing for it, as I have told thee already."

"But that is not all."

"Not all?" he repeated. "What more can there be?"

"Thou sayest thou dost not care for the Thar. But they will make thee care. And" — after a moment's silence — she added, "there is worse than that. I do not know how to tell thee."

"Nay, speak. Fear not," he pleaded.

"If I tell, it is bad; if I keep silence, it is equally bad."

She hung her head and turned away her eyes from his too ardent glance. He saw it was something serious.

"Thou art ashamed to tell me," he said; "but that ought not to be. Thou shouldst have no secrets from me. Hold nothing back. Tell me all. Do not fear. I shall not be hard on thee. And if they are evil tidings, and I must hear them, I would rather have them

from thy lips than from another's. I can bear it better."

"Thou art very kind," she began, "and I believe all thou sayest; but what am I that thou shouldst care about my troubles to take them to heart, or why should I weary thee with my weeping?"

"Only show me the matter, and I will do all I can to help thee, even though it take my life," he exclaimed. "Show me thy whole heart."

She supported herself against a fragment of rock that had broken away from the cliff, while her lips parted slowly:

"My uncle has promised me to Abd-el-nour."

She added not another word; and it was not needed for Hassan.

He was greatly moved. He was passionately angry.

"What, that miserable old wretch!" he cried. "Cursed be his father and his father's father! Why, the old ass has three wives already; why should he want to take a fourth?"

"The law allows it," she said.

"Ay, so it does; but that does not make it right."

"I overheard them speaking of it the other day, in the Wady-el-Werd," she continued. "They did not know I was so near them; I was hidden from them by a rose-bush, and I heard every sound. Abd-el-nour told my Uncle Ismail he would soon have the amount made up that he had promised him for me."

"Yes," interrupted Hassan, "he would buy thee as he would buy a horse or an ox; and, when he had thee, would use thee as badly as a beast of burden, or worse."

"I know it," she said, with a dejected air. "Thou speakest the truth."

"It would be worse with thee then than it is now."

"Yes; it is indeed so."

"It is hard to believe — hard to think thy uncle Ismail would do this thing to thee. How could he want to bring this evil upon thee?"

The young man's countenance had darkened, his whole expression had changed in the last few minutes;

so that he looked like a different being, and Hilwe feared to face him.

"It is true," she said. "He cares more for the money than for me. I heard them talk of the bargain as they stood together under the big olive-tree. There, thou canst see the very spot from here, in the hollow of the Wady." And she pointed out the place, as if it were an unquestionable confirmation of her statement.

CHAPTER III

HASSAN turned mechanically toward the direction indicated by Hilwe.

The Wady-el-Werd, or Valley of Roses, lay in many a winding curve below, with its olive-groves, vineyards and rose-gardens, the latter giving it its name, while above towered the village of Malha, seated on its arid, rocky acclivity. The agglomeration of houses on the highest summit of the conical tell or hill gave the crowded village the aspect of a fortification. Bare and bleached, like a calcined bone, it gleamed, helplessly exposed to the unmitigated glare of that merciless Palestine sun, which is a burning as well as a shining light. It was a relief to turn from the pinnacled village to the valley below, with its green pastures, its roses and olive-groves, and long-reaching multiplied shadows.

It was the only home or place of abode Hilwe had ever known. Here she went in and out in the monotonous round of her simple daily life, cognisant of next to nothing of the great outside world, save what she might have learned when, in an occasional visit, she accompanied some of the older women, conveying the produce of their fields to the market in Jerusalem.

At such times the men, the lords of creation, might be seen riding their donkeys, while the women tramped on foot over the rocky, weary way with their heavy loads.

Perhaps it was grapes they carried; and picturesque enough they looked with the tall baskets on their heads, filled with the golden or purple clusters, and wreathed on top with the long trailing branches and soft green leaves of the vine. Or the load might be of apricots, almonds, figs or olives, or the crimson-flushed globes of the pomegranate, the royal fruit with spiked crown.

In the season of roses, the burden consisted of great sacks and crates of the fragrant blossoms, principally to be made into rose-water for sprinkling the pilgrims and objects of piety at the sacred shrines in the Holy City, or the guests at weddings and other festive occasions.

The roses in their natural state were largely sold in the market or to the hotels; and considerable quantities were bought by the convents and other religious establishments. But there were few of the old families of Jerusalem that did not know how to manufacture rose-water, and that did not, each year, put up a goodly supply, drenching their favoured guests with it, and using it lavishly in various ways. The monks of the great Armenian Convent had, indeed, obtained a high reputation for making a peculiar and superior description of the sweet water.

So there was a large demand, and a high price was paid for this product of the Valley of Roses; and the rose harvest was always looked forward to with much interest and anxiety by the people of Malha. Even the rose-gardens along the shore of the Mediterranean at Tyre and Sidon had, not infrequently, to be drawn on to eke out and satisfy the demand for the supply of the queenly flower, which in the valleys around Jerusalem was of the most intensely odourous species, resembling the damask and Provence roses.

At the time of blossoming, the fenced fields were closely watched and guarded all day, and even during the night, to prevent depredation and theft. And early each morning the luxuriant blooms were cut with much rejoicing, and immediately conveyed to market.

All along the winding road groups of women might

be seen bearing on their heads the fragrant burdens destined for the ancient city; and Hilwe was only too glad to be able to escape from the galling routine of her wearisome daily tasks, and join the hurrying troop.

She was light of foot, and bore her share of the work well and with spirit; and there was much to relieve the tedium of the way, the stimulus of the company being in itself a pleasure.

Then there were the wonderful sights of the city and its varied life. Visitors from all quarters of the globe might be seen thronging the narrow streets. What a revelation it was to her to watch them! — while the bazaars, to her untutored mind, seemed a vision from another world.

It is true the loads borne over this long distance, from Malha to Jerusalem, were not always of as agreeable a kind as those mentioned. Often they were of wood, the roots of the olive or oak grubbed out of the ground, and forming with charcoal, brought in in sacks or paniers, the principal fuel of the land. At the proper season they consisted of great bundles of grass. Or most frequently, they were water from the fountain, carried in goat-skins, for the supply of the wealthier families of the Holy City.

This water has a great reputation for its salubrious properties; and as Jerusalem, in itself, is otherwise almost totally dependent on the rain which falls during the "rainy season," and is stored for many months in underground cisterns, — which rain-water, getting low and doubtless full of extraneous matter towards the autumn, is, more or less, dangerous to health, — all those who can afford it procure water from some outside source, such as from the well at Malha, or from Ain Kârim, whose water is held in even higher repute, as being from the birthplace of Saint John the Baptist.

More than once on such occasions Hassan had formed one of a company coming in from Bettîr. And though he had kept apart with the men of his village, Hilwe had overheard the women, as they walked together, commend him for his good looks. Indeed, they did not hesitate, in what might be considered

rather broad language, to express their opinion of him, pronouncing him of shapely build, comely, and well-favoured above the common, and, in short, a man to be desired.

And now, as he stood beside her on the hillside, his gaze directed to the spot she had indicated in the Valley of Roses, it all appeared like a dream to Hilwe.

"The impossible has come to pass," she said.

He who had seemed so far off from her — so unapproachable, was now so near, speaking such kind words as might make any woman proud and happy.

And yet there was a horrible dread overhanging it all. Yes, it was like a nightmare, from which she feared she would wake and find him gone, and lost to her forever.

She wanted to tell him everything that had been said in that fateful conversation she had overheard; but when she saw the peculiar expression of his face, she feared to speak to him. Even when he turned to her once more, she cast her eyes down, and covered her mouth with her robe.

"Hilwe, it is best I should know it," at last he said with a great effort. "It is best to tell me every word. What did they say? What did thy uncle Ismail and Abd-el-nour say, under the great olive-tree?"

The sound of his voice went through her like fine melancholy music as he spoke, deep and low, in a subdued but manly tone. She could have died to save him the pain. She could have done anything for him then. Her shame or shyness was forgotten.

"They spoke of the coming harvest," she began, "and the crop of roses, which they said would be abundant and fine. And Abd-el-nour said the barley-harvest would be early and good. And then he counted what everything would bring in to him, — the lentils, the barley, wheat, olives, grapes, and all."

She hesitated for a moment, then continued.

"He said, with what he already had laid up, that by the time the doura was ripe and garnered he would have enough to make up the amount he had promised

my uncle for me. I was greatly frightened, and I held my breath and did not dare to move, fearing they would hear or see me. I crouched down behind the rose-bush, as I told thee, and I had to listen to everything they said. I thought they would never go, and that they would find me and drag me out. And there I lay like one half dead, until they went away. And I heard them still talking as they went up towards Malha; and I am sure it was about that."

A frightful look of concentrated rage gathered in the young man's face, as Hilwe proceeded in her statement. But, with Oriental self-control, he gave no other outward evidence of his feelings. Though he seemed to be at the utmost limit of his endurance, he did not permit himself to speak. The inward shock and struggle had something of the speechless agony of the ferine creature in them.

"That is all. I have told thee all," she said, as if to elicit some reply.

Still he remained as one who is dumb.

"Thou dost not speak. Thou sayest not one word," exclaimed Hilwe.

Receiving no response, at last she ventured to look up at him.

"Why is thy countenance fallen?" she asked.

He made no reply.

"Thou art angry with me; — thou hatest me!" she cried.

"No, no," he said. "How could that be? It is because I love thee that I feel so." And he stretched out his arms towards her.

Yet in the first brunt of his blind despair it is probable he included her and all the world in his dumb hate. But this was only for a moment.

As he spoke, his impulse was to clasp her in his arms, to press her to his aching heart, poor fellow!

But this is forbidden and dangerous work; and just then came the murmur of a soft silvery chime from over the hill, and she instinctively drew away from him.

They had heard and recognised the sound simulta-

neously. That peculiar intermittent tinkling could have but one source, as they knew quite well. It was the melodious ring of the camels' bells, softened by the distance, and which had reached them before the caravan appeared in sight.

It plainly was a large company; and the beasts of burden were heavily laden with merchandise.

The cries of the camel-drivers by this time were heard.

Through vistas in the great shouldering masses of rock which outcropped from the greensward, at length might be seen the train of camels with their curved necks and malignantly insolent expression, as they strode by, into a more distant road, leading into the highway.

"They are not coming near us. They are going another way," said Hassan, to reassure Hilwe; while the caravan passed too far off to notice them.

"It is well," she said, relieved, when all had gone by.

And now he came very close to her while he spoke.

"I am determined to see thine uncle Ismail and the sheik," he said. "I am not going to sit still and suffer this great shame, this evil thing, to come to pass."

He lifted up his voice in a proud and confident tone.

She kept her eyes bent down, and was silent.

"I am determined," he repeated.

And yet no one knew better than they did the almost hopeless character of the case. The prejudices, customs and hates of generations presented obstacles well-nigh insurmountable. The superstitious habits of a semi-barbarous people are not easily overcome; and it was these Hassan had undertaken to conquer.

Even now, as they fondly supposed themselves so secure from observation, a malign eye was watching them.

Hassan, knowing too well the dangerous ground he stood on, and the risk they ran in being seen together under such circumstances, had more than once swept with sentinel gaze the approaches. He appreciated

fully the uneasiness manifested by Hilwe, and felt he was responsible, and must guard and protect her from any evil consequences which might ensue should their meeting be detected, having in the first place taken due precaution against being surprised.

These fellaheen are savage in their punishment of any infringement of their immemorial usages. They seldom overlook their being tampered with, though, at the same time, it is true that some of the most serious offences and crimes among them, including even murder, can, with proper management, be compounded for, not seldom on a money basis.

Still more often the infliction of a sort of retaliation is resorted to, something on the old principle of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," not even stopping short of "a life for a life." The methods of procedure in such cases are not unfrequently of the most extraordinary and brutal character, and scarcely to be believed by those living under a civilised government.

It was therefore not without some trepidation, at least on the part of Hilwe, that, in the midst of Hassan's more ardent demonstrations, they suddenly heard the noise of an approaching footstep among the loose rocks and stones not far behind them. At first Hassan was inclined to think the sound might have been made by a straying sheep, or some loitering member of the caravan which had passed. But he was soon undeceived.

"It is Kadra," gasped Hilwe.

Turning quickly in the direction of Hilwe's gaze, Hassan beheld the intruder, who now was rapidly coming towards them.

The young people had instantly sprung apart; and Hassan at once began assisting Hilwe to replace the water-jar upon her head. This he had succeeded in doing just as Kadra reached them.

Before them stood, in the dark-blue dress of the country, dyed of the native indigo, an old woman — old at least in appearance, if not in years, with somewhat of a hag-like aspect. She had a beak-shaped

nose, and her black eyes had a sharp unpleasant glare, that one had rather not encounter, for they seemed to look through and through the unhappy individual who came under their inspection.

Over her forehead and around her head, beneath the flowing white drapery or veil which covered it, she wore several rows of the silver Turkish coin known as the bishlik, which had been rendered convex, and perforated and linked together for the purpose. Her face was further embellished by a plentiful tatooing of a bluish colour. Not only were stars, circles and dots, as well as other figures distributed over her cheeks, forehead and chin, as well as around her eyes, but even the tip of her nose was not neglected, being ornamented, if so it may be called, with three significant clusters of dots. Her hands and arms were a pictorial wonder with similar adornment, — only that, in compliance with the religion, nothing that has life was there or elsewhere represented upon her.

In truth, Kadra's ugliness was almost phenomenal, and only seemed intensified by these artificial attempts to improve her looks. "The husband of an ugly woman should be blind," say the natives, with their unconquerable love of beauty. It may be added, she was the gossip and scandalmonger of the village, whose presence was dreaded by all, men and women, and old and young alike. Some said she possessed the "evil eye"; and this added to the fear she inspired, and gave her a certain influence.

"Fatima has been asking for thee," she said, with a malicious grimace, as she came up, and addressing Hilwe, who was hastening to take her departure.

"I am going," replied the girl, after saluting her.

"I thirsted and asked the damsel for a little water, and she gave me to drink," explained Hassan, with an ease and coolness worthy of a prince of the blood royal.

"Thou wast long enough about it to satisfy a legion of soldiers," retorted Kadra.

"Why sayest thou thus?"

"I saw thee from the hill."

"Thou hadst naught to see," answered the young man, disdainfully.

"Had I not, indeed?"

"Thou sawest me quench my thirst."

"Ah, I perceive the noble young man chooses to be playful! I tell thee I saw thy doings. I saw thee and Hilwe."

It was true she had seen them from the hill, and had gone around another way, determined to steal upon them unawares, and overhear their conversation. And had not a loosened stone rolled down and given the alarm, she would have succeeded in her purpose. As it was, her suspicions were sufficiently aroused in the matter; and she came to the conclusion that she knew quite enough to condemn them, though she had not heard a word of what they had said.

As for Hassan and Hilwe, they knew but too well it would be next to a miracle for Kadra to refrain from giving, with the most exaggerated colouring, the account of what she had seen. They were almost sure it would be told in Malha that evening. Their only consolation was that Kadra, from her repeated slanders and evil-speaking, had earned such distrust and dislike on all sides, that her story would not be believed, but would be set down to her maliciousness. Indeed, her name had become, with her neighbors, the synonym for falsehood; so that, were any improbable statement made, it was common to hear the remark, "Oh, that is a 'Kadra'!"

A consciousness of this feeling, no doubt, influenced the woman when, after having stood her ground till Hilwe had departed, she resumed her journey to the fountain. With the most selfish calculation, the inveterate old gossip argued with herself the pros and cons of the affair. At first she had thought what a delicious piece of scandal it would make in the village; then considered how, at best, she would gain nothing by revealing the facts, even could she get them to be believed; while by keeping them secret she could control Hassan and Hilwe, and, perhaps, levy tribute on them; or, at least, get a good backsheesh from Hassan.

Before she set out on her return trip, she had come to the conclusion to act on this latter assumption. At least she would try its effect. And now, with her filled water-jar, she went somewhat out of her way to reach the place to where Hassan meanwhile had moved with his sheep.

Little did he think he should see her to talk with her so soon again. True, at first he had half inclined to appeal to her covetousness, and bribe her to be silent. But the more he thought of it, the less use there seemed to him to be in taking such a course. At most it could only avail to bridge over the time till he had opportunity to see the sheik and the uncle of Hilwe. Yet, under certain circumstances, even that might prove of importance.

"Surely, this grief of mine of being in love is in addition to my other griefs," said Hassan, in the quaint language of the country.

She found the young man stretched at full length upon the ground, his shepherd's crook cast aside, and he seeming in anything but a happy frame of mind. In his trouble Hassan looked more interesting and handsomer than ever; and, woman as she was, perhaps this was not without its effect upon her. Yet he did not appear to notice her.

As she lowered the jar from her shoulder, Hassan retained his recumbent posture, languidly turning his eyes on her, but not attempting to assist her. He felt there was something sinister in her thus approaching him, and he did not know how to take it.

With her peculiar disposition, she could not bear to lose the opportunity of mocking him.

"Ah, if it were only Hilwe," she exclaimed, "how soon he would run to help her! But the well-made handsome young man lets the old woman groan under the burden without lifting a finger to assist her."

In spite of his dejection, the humour of her words had the intended effect, and drew a smile from Hassan. But still he did not move or speak.

She was emboldened to carry the joke further; and, coming nearer, she offered him some of the water.

"Art thou not thirsty? Dost thou not want to drink?" she asked in a satirical accent. "But I plainly perceive the water thou thirstest for is of an entirely different kind." And lowering her voice, she whispered distinctly, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."

Hassan's eyes remained fixed on her; still he did not reply, nor did he move; but lay stretched out before her, in his original posture. And fascinating enough he looked to turn the head and capture the heart of any woman, young or old.

"Hassan, my son," she said, speaking in an earnest tone, while she set aside the water, and drew still nearer to him, "I have it in my power, as is well known to thee, to do thee much evil or a great good. Which shall it be? It is for thee to decide. Thou shouldst not have spoken to the young girl. In that thou didst a grievous wrong. As thou didst dare venture thy affections on a woman of Malha, thou shouldst have gone, according to our custom, to some old woman to speak for thee. Why didst thou not come to me? I would have been thy go-between, thankless and dangerous work as it is like to be."

Still there was no reply.

His silence was exasperating, and she would have left him, in anger; but his great unearthly-looking eyes, like the eyes of some spirit, held her, as the serpent holds the charmed bird. Spell-bound, and half-magnetised, she felt something ominous must happen — perhaps something fatal — at least he must move or speak, or she must scream out or go wild.

"Speak, Hassan; I beseech of thee, speak to me! Merciful goodness! is he dying or dead that he doth not speak or move?"

Then came an uncontrollable impulse to touch him. She laid her hand upon his arm — his naked chest. It was a great relief. He was warm, he was alive. Thank Allah! What a thrill went through her from the glowing flesh!

Just then a fine sheep, in tolerable condition, came

up to them, nibbling the grass. Its long fawn-coloured ears drooped gracefully; and its enormous tail, the tid-bit of the natives, was looped up, to prevent it trailing on the ground. The sight recalled to Kadra's mind her original purpose — at least, to obtain from Hassan a good backsheesh, a valuable present.

"That is a fine fat sheep," she said. "The gracious and comely young man Hassan would find it to his advantage to give it to Kadra — Kadra, who has it in her power to do him much evil."

She placed her hand upon the imperial-like, pointed beard which covered his chin, taking hold of it, and stroking it gently, to emphasise her request, as is the custom, meaning there must be no denial. And most native persons consider that a petition so presented must not be refused, if it is possible, within reasonable limits, to grant it.

"Will not my lord favourably consider my request?" she asked.

Suddenly, without the least warning, he threw his head forward, and caught her hand in his mouth, with a snap like that of a wild animal, biting sharply into the flesh with his bright, milk-white teeth.

A loud yell burst from her lips, and she flung herself backward in an agony of pain and terror; but probably suffering more from the latter than the former.

"Thou hast bitten me to the bone," she screamed.

"What does all this mean?" said Hassan, affecting great astonishment, and at length sitting up, and finally standing erect.

"Thou hast bitten me badly," she repeated, nursing her hand.

It was evident he had formed his purpose, and was carrying it out.

"What art thou talking about? Thy words are as those of the foolish woman. What art thou trying to say?"

"I have already told thee," she answered bitterly. "Thinkest thou I am blind, and did not see thee with the damsel?"

"Because I, a man of Bettîr, when perishing with

thirst, ask a damsel from Malha for a draught of water, and she stops and gives me to drink, dost thou suppose I am such an one as to imagine that she favours me in the least degree, any more than I favour her, or that I have found grace in her sight, any more than she has in mine? and that with the Thar—the immemorial blood-feud staring us in the face — either of us could have the most remote idea of my choosing her to be my wife?"

He felt he must deceive Kadra to the utmost, to protect Hilwe from her tongue.

For a moment Kadra, taken aback by this sudden and most unexpected outburst, was struck dumb; and, a wonderful fact with her, had nothing to say.

"A woman of thy judgment ought to know better," continued Hassan, scornfully. "I really thought better of thee. Wouldst thou have me measure the moon? Or why should I pull down a mosque for a brick? What is one woman more than another to me?"

"But I saw thee and Hilwe both together; and what could I think?" returned Kadra, at last finding words. "And what madest thou bite me?" she asked, still pressing her hand.

"Bite thee!" exclaimed Hassan, in an amazed tone.

"Yes, verily."

"What meanest thou?"

"I came to thee as a friend, and thou hast bitten me. Can anything be worse than that? Thou didst act like a wild beast, and as if thou wast demented."

He took her hand in his, and examined it closely, as if it were difficult to see the hurt.

"As to the hand, it may not be well before thou art a third time married," he answered with a laugh, applying a proverb of the country, with an allusion well understood by Kadra, who already had had two matrimonial experiences. "Of course a woman of thy worth and good looks will have no difficulty in speedily getting a third husband."

A self-satisfied smile on Kadra's lips showed that the words had their intended result. She drew herself up, and again came near Hassan.

"Praise be to Allah, I am not so bad-looking. Nor am I as old as I look. Am I?"

"Far from it," was his terse reply.

"But thou knowest, in spite of what thou sayest, Hassan, thy mind is set on the damsel. Love and musk do not remain concealed. I could be of good help to thee; or do thee much evil. And there is that sheep. Dost thou not think thou wouldst find it profitable to give it to me?"

"As to the daughter of her people, what can she be to me, as already I have told thee? Neither of us is so foolish as to try for what is out of our reach. But so far as the sheep is concerned, that is different. I can refuse thee nothing thou askest of me, Kadra. The sheep is thine. Only leave it with me for a few days longer, and it will be in better condition to give it to thee. Meanwhile, say nothing as to what thou hast seen. There is naught in it. And why make more mischief? The blood-feud is bad enough."

He felt the postponement in giving her the sheep would help to keep her on her best behaviour.

"Blessed mayest thou be, and thy children's children!" exclaimed Kadra. "I knew, all the time, that thy heart was in the right place." And she kissed Hassan's hand for respect and gratitude. "I shall do as thou sayest," she added. "And I shall speak sweet words for thee," bowing low. "My lord's eyes have looked graciously upon his handmaid. It shall be according to thy word."

She had accomplished her purpose, after all. She had obtained a good backsheesh. The sheep was hers; and she had already planned in her mind the feast she would have with it, calling in all her neighbours and friends. It should be stuffed with rice, butter, spices, and pine seeds in galore, and should be baked entire, and served in a lordly dish.

"But I must be going," she said, adjusting the water-jar on her shoulder, in which Hassan this time assisted her, and to whom she was profuse in her thanks.

"Thou art as straight as any young woman," he said.

"Good-bye, and the blessing of Allah be upon thee," was her smiling reply.

"Peace be with thee," said Hassan. "Go in peace."

"Ma'-es-salameh."

She trotted off, with a well-satisfied air, chuckling to herself at the success of her stratagem.

Hassan stood motionless and silent, looking after her with thoughtful countenance till she was out of earshot.

"She is a daughter of Eva and of Delilah," at last he broke out. "I have no confidence in her. She is a dangerous woman, such as our Prophet — to whom be praise — has warned us of in the Koran. Verily, she is even the brawling woman of whom Suleyman the Wise spake in his Proverbs. Yet though I trust her not, nor value her fair words, a bribe may bind her, and the promised backsheesh may hold her."

The innocent sheep, unconscious of its impending doom, had drawn nearer and nearer, till, at last, it cropped the herbage at Hassan's very feet.

"Yes," he said, with sadness, addressing the dumb animal, "thou art hers. I have given my word. A promise is a promise; and thou wilt have to go to her."

He turned aside to put on his abai.

"But, after all, it is for Hilwe," he said, a smile relaxing his lips.

CHAPTER IV

THE Spollatos were an old titled Neapolitan family, now much decayed, and reduced from their former high estate; but still, with the native pride of position and birth, keeping up appearances to the best of their ability. Though so long resident in Naples, they had come originally from Venice, and the family traditions had it that they were descended from one of the Doges. In both Naples and Venice the family had been possessed of great wealth. They were vessel

owners and merchant princes in the days of Venetian splendour and glory, now long departed, apparently forever; and the paltry remnant of their grand sea-ventures and reduced fleet was now managed with declining fortune by Giovanni Spollato and his nephew Leone, the last of their race.

The old man, who, as well as his nephew, bore the title of count, had fondly hoped that in Leone the honours and dignities as well as the wealth of the Spollatos would be revived. He would not confess, even to himself, that their fortunes were gradually growing worse, and to the last he kept a brave front to the world, so that it was generally believed he was much better off than in reality he was. Any little temporary improvement in their affairs was dwelt on by him, and given undue prominence, to the exclusion of their misadventures.

True, some years ago, on the death of his wife, which had shortly succeeded the death of his son, an only child, in his affliction he had put down their carriage as an unnecessary piece of extravagance, selling the horses. The carriage itself he could not quite make up his mind to part with; and it still lay in the coach-house, with all its equipments, the coat-of-arms of the Spollatos, surmounted with coronet, on its panels. He argued, one could always hire a pair of horses, and the world be none the wiser as to their ownership. But the carriage was very seldom used by either himself or his nephew; though it seemed to give the old man peculiar comfort to think it was there, ready for use.

There is no doubt that whatever feelings the uncle might naturally have toward his nephew were intensified by the fact that in Leone was now centred all the future of the family, even its very perpetuation. Pride, therefore, was a pronounced factor in the affection of the old man for the younger. And as Leone entered the room, this morning, the presence of the good-looking young fellow with his graceful, dignified movements sent a thrill of happiness to his uncle's heart.

The greetings over, and breakfast being served,

Count Spollato, as they took their seats, returned to the examination of a pile of letters which had arrived by the last mail, and had been placed on the table. The occupation enlivened without interrupting his breakfast.

"You were out late last night, Leone," he said, looking up from his employment with a pleasant glance.

Leone bowed his head, while he simply assented to the remark.

"I waited up for you till I became so sleepy I had to go to bed. You were at the opera, I suppose." And, without waiting for reply, the uncle continued, "What was the piece? Let me see. Ah, Donizetti's 'Lucia di Lammermoor'! I always liked it — always liked Donizetti's music with its effective changes and surprises. Was the performance good?"

Now, a few nights before, it had happened that Leone was present at a rendition of this opera. He therefore could speak with knowledge on the subject — that is, as to the character of the performers.

"Signorina Tantorini is, as you know, considered to have a very fine voice," he said. "I like her greatly; and she is well supported. You will see what the paper says."

Leone, in the midst of the questioning, had dropped his fork and seized the morning paper, and, looking up the theatrical notices, he placed before his uncle the rather brief comments with which the Italian journals usually satisfy themselves and their readers in this department.

"'Highly artistic performance. Exquisite rendering of the arias, and refined perception of the different parts,'" read his uncle. "I wish I had gone with you," he added, with a burst of enthusiasm.

A faint self-conscious smile played about Leone's mouth for an instant as he considered where the realisation of that wish would have taken his uncle, who presently continued: "But I am getting too old for this night-work. It does not any longer agree with me to be out so late. It's all well enough for you young people."

There was no absolute desire on Leone's part to deceive his uncle; neither for personal reasons was there exactly any necessity that he should do so. Only it would certainly have been inconvenient and unusual, in short, "not the thing," to have given the facts in the case. Had his uncle known the truth in the matter, he would probably have felt little surprise, and would have satisfied himself by administering to Leone a mild rebuke qualified by a joke or a laugh. There is nothing straitlaced in the Italian character.

"But I am neglecting to hand you your letters, Leone," said his uncle, passing to his nephew three or four notes which he had selected from the pile before him.

Leone seized them with avidity, glad to cover whatever embarrassment he might have felt, by quickly breaking the seals of the notes, and devouring the contents with his breakfast. They seemed to be mostly invitations to parties; for Leone was much sought after, even among the best families.

His uncle, similarly occupied with his correspondence, gave vent, from time to time, after his manner, to various comments on the letters he had received, sometimes reading aloud brief extracts from them. At last he opened one, the contents of which seemed to agitate him. He glanced through it rapidly; and then, with contracted brows and compressed lips, sat silently pondering what he had read, while he kept smoothing out the creases of the paper.

"Leone, you will, I am sure, do me the credit of my having always spared your feelings, at least on one subject," at length he said. "Though while sparing yours, I have also, no doubt, spared my own."

He paused for a moment, as if not knowing how to continue the subject to which this awkward brace of sentences was seemingly but the introduction; while Leone bowed his head, and briefly acknowledged in advance the truth of the statements, though wondering as to what was to come.

"You have always been too kind to me in every way," he said.

The old man still held the letter in his hand, and his eyes were bent on it as he resumed in a distinct but suppressed tone of voice. It seemed as if he did not care to trust himself to speak loud.

"This letter is from Jerusalem, from your mother's brother — your uncle Anselmo," he said, turning to the signature at the foot of the letter, as though it was necessary to assist his memory, but in reality to avoid looking, while he spoke, at Leone. "It seems he feels the weight of his accumulating years; his health is poor; and before the end of his days, which he fancies is not far off, he longs to see the only child of his deceased sister. In short, he has some special communication to make to you, and begs you will visit him in the Holy City."

"And you — you do not approve of this."

"It appears to me you should have something to say in the matter, Leone. Indeed I want you to do exactly as you wish."

"My wishes are yours, Uncle Giovanni. I shall be guided by you in everything. You know very well it will be far from pleasant for me to undertake such a journey. How can I care very much to meet Uncle Anselmo, whom I really never knew? To say truth, I shrink from the meeting — from all association with him and his people. How could it be otherwise?"

The young man's face was a study as he spoke. It glowed with a certain touch of indignation, and as if something rose up within him in protest against himself, against his very flesh and blood. The crimson flush burned through the olive cheek.

"It was so unfortunate, Leone, so unfortunate. Poor Francesco, my father never forgave him for the marriage; and, much as I loved my brother, I dared not plead for him. Indeed my father would not have his name mentioned in his presence. I have never talked to you much about the circumstances; they were too painful to me; and I felt it would be happier for you to be ignorant of them. I would have kept you ignorant. But fate has ordained otherwise."

"Uncle Giovanni, I think it best that you should

tell me all. I know the worst, I suppose; and I can bear what further you have to say. We are alone together; it is only right that I should know all."

Leone turned to his uncle with a look the latter could hardly face.

"It seems only yesterday when it all happened, when Francesco — when your father left for Venice. He had greatly displeased your grandfather by his dissipations and neglect of business. He had the family failing, too much admiration for women, and, I suppose, inherited it. When I think of it now, it appears to me it is highly improbable that he was a whit worse than half the young men I see around me. But there is a way of doing a thing. It is that makes all the difference. And if one has those failings, he should have sufficient discretion to be governed in them by common prudence, and not to let them interfere with his business or his reputation, you know."

"Yes, yes," assented Leone, who had arisen and begun to pace the room in some agitation; but presently returned and resumed his seat.

"The world can forgive much folly in a man if he only has sense enough to know where to stop," continued his uncle. "There must be a certain limit to it all. He must not transgress against the accepted principles or the prejudices of society.

"But to resume. The agent for our house in Venice had become involved in certain difficulties; your grandfather, whose health had then begun to fail, could not spare me to go and attend to the matters there, and so sent Francesco, with many charges as to what he should do in the case; giving him to understand that in this he had one more and last opportunity of redeeming his character. But if, in Naples, under his father's eye, Francesco failed to restrain himself, it is not to be supposed that away, in Venice, he would be any better. Certain it is that he totally mismanaged the business he was sent on, neglecting it for his pleasures, to your grandfather's great indignation. It really seemed as if Francesco had gone from bad to worse. His excesses ended in a severe

illness. No doubt, his life was at one time in extreme danger. During this he was paid every attention by a highly respectable Hebrew family, merchants who had long been resident in Venice, and with whom our house had for many years had some dealings. Nothing could exceed their kindness. They even took your father into their home to nurse him. The family, known as the Jacobini, which was doubtless a corruption of the original Hebrew name, consisted of the father, already advanced in years, and a son and daughter. The son, Anselmo, a perfect contrast to poor Francesco, was his father's right hand in his business. The daughter, remarkable for her beauty, and named Rachele, was—"

"My mother," said Leone, completing the sentence.

"Yes, your mother," assented his uncle.

"I never knew her. She is little more than a name to me," said Leone, with a sigh, and eagerly leaning towards his uncle.

"Yes; she died while you were a mere infant. You could not remember her. I only saw her once. She was certainly uncommonly handsome, and had scarcely a trace of her Jewish blood about her. Two such good-looking young people brought into such intimate relations, one of them as fascinating as your father, the other his patient, lovely nurse, it was not difficult to see the result. They were, in short, madly in love with each other, after the first week or so, and, in spite of the religious prejudices of the Jacobini family, the young lady, who was the spoiled pet of her father and brother, carried her point, and as soon as Francesco was convalescent the marriage was solemnised."

"And did Grandfather Spollato have nothing to say?" asked Leone.

"He had been kept quite ignorant of affairs till toward the close, when a friendly warning reached him. He stormed, of course. But his decided opposition and veto were treated with little regard or respect by Francesco, who did not consider it necessary to inform the Jacobini family of his father's prohibition."

"Oh, how could my father do it?" exclaimed Leone, moving his chair away, and burying his face in his hands. "It almost makes me hate myself to think of it."

"Do not talk so, Leone," said his uncle. "You must not take it so to heart. It would not be right. You must not imagine that these were of the common sort of Jew. The Jacobinis had made more than one intermarriage with some of our better class of Italian families, and in the more remote past this had occurred doubtless repeatedly. They bore little or no trace of the ancient people in their appearance. At any rate, in the case of your mother, I may say, you never would have imagined her being of Hebrew descent. True, taken together with the loss of our Venetian business, which our father always had great pride in, as being the origin of our house, and which disaster was largely due to Francesco's mismanagement, it preyed so on the old man's mind, it affected his health and shortened his days. He, too, had planned a distinguished matrimonial alliance for Francesco. I have often heard your grandfather say it broke his heart."

"No wonder," said Leone, who had been moving his chair farther and farther from his uncle, and now, with an indescribable look of chagrin on his handsome face, sprang up, and walked rapidly to the other end of the room.

"Calm yourself, I beseech of you, Leone. I surely did not tell you this to pain you, but because you requested it, and we both considered it necessary," said his uncle, as he arose and followed him.

Leone hung his head with an expression of shame and grief.

"Some of the best families of Castile have an infusion of Moorish or Jewish blood," resumed his uncle. "You have heard of the King of Spain who decreed that every man in Spain who had any Hebrew blood in his veins should wear a yellow hat. The decree was absolute, including from the highest to the lowest in the land. The next day the court chamberlain entered the king's presence bearing three yellow hats. The

king, annoyed, asked him why he brought them there, and who they were meant for. 'One is for your Majesty,' was the reply, 'another for the Prime Minister, and the third is for myself.' You see, Leone, what a foolish thing such prejudice is."

"Ah!" exclaimed Leone, sorrowfully, "I have read Spanish history, where it states that the wealth of the Jews furnished an obvious resource for repairing, by marriage, the decayed fortunes of the nobility, and that there was scarcely a family of rank in the land whose blood had not been contaminated, at some period or other, by mixture with the *mala sangre* — bad blood, as it came afterwards to be termed — of the house of Judah; an ignominious stain, which no time has been deemed sufficient wholly to purge away."

Leone's face grew dark as he proceeded.

"These are the words of an American historian," he resumed, "the citizen of a republic, remember; and he further speaks of the anxiety shown by the modern Spaniard to prove that the *sangre azul*, blue blood, flows through his veins, uncontaminated by any Moorish or Jewish taint."

"He simply describes the Spanish prejudice on the subject, Leone."

"Yes, and manifests his own prejudice."

"I can hardly think that," said the old count.

Then, as he saw the grieved look in his nephew's dark eyes, he threw his arms around him and embraced him, again and again, exclaiming, "Oh, Leone, do not feel so! Have I ever treated you unkindly? Have I not always loved you as my son?"

"You have been far too good to me always, as I have told you," replied the young man. "I have not deserved half your kindness. I am unworthy of it. And now I feel I am like a debased coin — a degraded Spollato, that ought not to pass current."

"Don't, don't!" cried his uncle. "You are every inch of you a Spollato — every inch of you, I say!" and he warmly pressed Leone to him repeatedly. He had never since his nephew was a little boy shown so much love and passionate fondness for him.

It was impossible for a man of Leone Spollato's impulses not to respond to such feeling demonstrations. He was deeply moved at the kind entreaties and assurances of one whom he had learned to respect and love from his youngest years — who was to him a father in every sense but the one — he was not the author of his being. The two men stood locked in each other's arms for several minutes without speaking, the noble face of the elder looking like the grand countenance of some great doge or emperor, all its best points brought out and accentuated by his affection for his nephew, and the fear lest that nephew should be unduly wounded by what had been said.

As they stood so close together, the likeness between them seemed stronger than ever. It was also common to more than one of the family portraits that hung round the room. There was one, especially, a remarkable portrait of a Venetian ancestor, which had been ascribed to Titian, in which the likeness was almost startling.

"When your father came here, a widower, with you, on the death of our father," continued the uncle, "every one noticed how like me you were, though you were such a little fellow. No one outside of the family knew anything of the peculiar circumstances of the marriage, and so it has remained to this day. Who would dream you had a drop of Jewish blood in your veins? Not one. Ever since your father's early death, you have been as my own son; and after the loss of my Giovanini, you have been doubly my son."

The old count's voice trembled, and tears gathered in his eyes as he spoke. He pressed Leone closer to him, as if he feared some cruel fate were about to deprive him of him.

"Promise me," he added, "that you will not let this dwell on your mind to trouble you."

"I do promise, dear uncle; I shall not let it trouble me, so far as I can help it," answered Leone. "I will do anything you require of me."

"And now, Leone," said his uncle, reverting to the original subject, "as to this visit to Jerusalem, I

really do not see how you can avoid it. Your uncle Anselmo is peculiarly urgent, and, apart from the claims of common humanity, his communication may be of great importance to you. From what he says, he seems so to consider it."

Though Leone said little or nothing, his attitude was far from encouraging. It evidently was politic not to press the subject any further at present; at least so his uncle thought.

"Well, well, let us say no more about it," he said. "You will, meanwhile, think over it. There can be no immediate haste required, I suppose. The old man, in spite of all his forebodings, is, no doubt, far enough off yet from being *in articulo mortis*. And now, Leone, remember your promise. You must not worry over anything I have told you. It would, indeed, be ridiculous to do so. And, for the matter of that, what family, including even royalty itself, is without blot or stain of some sort? Why, I remember hearing my father say that, in the olden time, they had a joke about our name, and used to declare it was originally Spogliato from *spoglia*, spoil, booty, having reference to the origin of our wealth and rise, through our sea-ventures, in the early Venetian days, when, no doubt, as in the case of many another noble family, the doings too often partook of a plundering and almost piratical character. The world has improved since that time."

And so his uncle ran on, trying to make light of what had been a sore matter to himself, and which he saw Leone took so bitterly to heart.

The truth was, as has been shown, that the affairs of the family were daily growing worse, and, more urgently than ever, forcing themselves upon the attention of the elder Spollato, who kept hoping they would mend presently, and who willingly would have concealed the exact state of the case even from himself.

As he sat that day in his ancient dusky office, overhauling his papers, his courageous old heart gave way sufficiently to confess the fear that he should not leave Leone as well off as he had expected. It meant much coming from such a man.

"I wish he would visit his uncle in Jerusalem," he added. "Those old Jews have a pile of gold laid by. Poor-looking and shabby as they keep themselves, I never knew it to fail. Whatever he has, much or little, he will probably give or leave to Leone, especially should Leone visit him. It may, perhaps, make up for my losses. Their money is just as clean as anyone's, even if they are Jews. And Anselmo must have a good share of the Jacobini hoardings, which ought to belong to Leone — if he only managed right. But there is no use telling my high-strung nephew this; it might spoil everything. I don't blame him, though, for despising the *marame* — the rubbish. People of God, indeed! Children of the devil!"

Thus ended the old man, his innate prejudice getting the better of him.

CHAPTER V

MONTHS passed by, and Leone still postponed leaving Naples for Jerusalem.

Had one been able to look in on Count Spollato in those days, as he lingered alone in his office, poring over his papers and account-books, he would have been found, oftener than ever, shaking his head and saying, "I fear I shall not be able to leave Leone as well off as I expected, when I die." It was always Leone and not himself he thought of, the handsome brave old man.

Long had he fought, almost single-handed, and without a murmur, against adverse circumstances. Too unselfish and courageous to recognise there was anything of peculiar merit in his devotion to others, or in the fortitude that carried a sublime head high above all trouble, he moved among his fellows only as an ordinary man.

He even did not perceive he was advancing in life — growing old, and less able to contend with the troubles which, each year, were becoming more complicated and more difficult to deal with. It was,

indeed, not easy for him to acknowledge age or its inroads; for there was little appearance of physical or mental decay about him. Of him it could truly be said: "His eye was not dim nor his natural force abated." He would strike his chest and say, "I am a young man yet, in every respect — *potente, vigoroso.*"

But new methods and new devices that he was little familiar with, or comparatively ignorant of, had been introduced in business. The power and tyranny of capital, too, were making themselves felt in large combinations and far-reaching schemes, unknown in former times.

Nor was Leone, however well-disposed he might be, quite capable of affording deliverance from this state of things, for his uncle had always brought him up more as the gentleman than as the man of business.

It was when the elder Spollato found himself alone with his accounts that the truth was forced upon him, and he was obliged to admit a constantly diminishing income.

For these and other similar reasons, though he did not advance them to Leone, he had urged his nephew's visit to Jerusalem. There was abundant occasion for this, for Anselmo Jacobini, weary under the delay, heart-sick from hope deferred, had written repeatedly since the first memorable letter, beseeching his nephew no longer to postpone coming to him. In this connection he again alluded to his advanced age and declining strength as motives for the visit.

"For the sake of common humanity, Leone," his uncle Giovanni would say to him, "you cannot neglect this duty. You have promised. You ought not to postpone it. Suppose your uncle Anselmo should die without your seeing him, you would never forgive yourself. It would always be a subject of remorseful regret to you."

"I will do as you wish, uncle," Leone would reply; and still he let the time pass.

It had now been several years since Anselmo Jacobini had left Venice and gone to reside in the Holy City.

Pious Jews, all over the world, have an intense long-

ing not only to visit the ancient capital of their forefathers, but also to reside there. Apart from the general religious feeling, or the mere matter of sentiment which underlies this desire, there is the wish to be buried on the Mount of Olives. And this arises from the curious superstition of the Jews that all Hebrews who are not buried on that mountain are dragged from wherever they may be interred, underneath the earth, to Olivet, to be judged there on the great day of final judgment. With the object of averting or, in some degree, mitigating the hideous doom, it is that the custom has arisen of placing a little bag of earth from Jerusalem in the coffin, beneath the head of the Jew who dies in other lands.

Thousands of aged Jews find their way to Jerusalem that they may die there, and be buried on the Mount. Scores of these ludicrously antiquated-looking beings may be seen on any day upon the streets of the city, in their odd dress, of which the peculiarity of the headgear is generally the most noticeable feature, covering as it does the widest of ranges, from the turban and tarboosh of the Oriental, to the low black plush hat of the Hebrew of Jerusalem, and the uncouth cap trimmed with bristling fur of the Polish Jew.

Those blear-eyed old fellows, tottering with age, with tangled gray or snow-white beards, and corkscrew ringlets on each side of the face, are a wonder among humanity. No other people are like them. They have an individuality of the most pronounced order, separating them from all other members of the human family.

The Children of Israel, Sons of Abraham, the People of God — their history is as peculiar as their countenance. And, knowing their history, you would say that the Jew is just what you might expect him to be. Never had any people of their time greater light. Never have any people so sinned against the light as they have sinned. Never have any people been so disgraced and degraded.

These are they who were delivered with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great

judgments from the bondage in Egypt. These are they who were led by pillar of cloud and of fire through the Red Sea and the wilderness up into this, the land of promise and of blessing, flowing with milk and honey. These are of the nation to whom the Almighty revealed himself as he had done to no other people, making a covenant with them, and showing himself in their holy place, between the cherubim, in the mystical Shekinah — the visible glory of the Lord!

These are the stiff-necked, rebellious, and adulterous people, according to the description of their own prophets. These are they who murmured against Jehovah in the midst of his lovingkindness and deliverance, longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and setting up the golden calf and worshipping it as the God who had delivered them. These are of the race who slew the Zidonians, that serene people, yet preserved their priest alive and kept their idol unbroken, that they, the people of God, forsooth, might continue the idolatrous worship they were sent to destroy! These are of the iniquitous and abominable kindred, full of uncleannesses, who defiled even the holy place, and set up an image of jealousy therein, turning their backs upon the Shekinah, that they might worship the idol! These are they who slew the prophets, and stoned the messengers of peace as malefactors! These are the people of whom the Lord has made a hissing and a byword and a proverb, as he said he would, scattering them among all the nations of the earth.

Look at them well; for the marks of all this are upon them! The marks of all this and much more brand their every feature. Great has been the sin — great the expiation.

This is the place — Jerusalem. And these are the people.

What agony and tears and bloody sweat have been poured out here!

What mighty works have been done under this sky — within the circle of these inclosing hills! Here, fearless of mighty men and kings, the great prophets delivered the messages of God; here the Divine Man

walked and taught; here was revealed Redemptive love, and the great sacrifice was consummated.

The voice of the All-Merciful rings out now, over it all, down the centuries, with the piteous grief of unfathomable love: —

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Desolate enough, forsooth, and worse than desolate is the house. The dark, narrow streets reek with unsavory odours. Ordure and filth of every kind rankle in the detestably offensive alleys and corners. Moslems, Jews, multiform Christians, semi-wild men, and strangers from many lands crowd the city. The carelessness, looseness and want of modesty of the Oriental are seen on every side. It is an old story here. The valley of the Dead Sea is in sight, with Sodom and Gomorrah in the depths of the bitter lake.

In the Jewish quarter of the ancient city, so far as filth, stench and degradation are concerned, the acme seems to be reached. With few exceptions, even the better class of houses have little to recommend them. The worst abodes are mere dens of darkness and misery, no better than, indeed scarcely as good as, the haunt of the wild beast.

The contracted, ill-paved streets, in which the balconies on each side almost meet, may be picturesque, but are unwholesome. The odd projecting lattices, like bird-cages, are a peculiar feature. These are all well provided with iron gratings or grillings, necessary for protection from robbery; and often have within a finer grating of wire, or of curiously carved wood. Occasionally a few flower-pots may be found adorning them, with trailing vines depending. But this is a feature less common in the Jewish than in the Mohammedan quarter. Indeed, the Moslem openly shows his love

for flowers, while, apparently, the Jew has comparatively but little feeling in this direction.

But it is those parts of the streets which are arched over, houses connecting with each side being built upon the archways, that present the most characteristic traits — dark, tunnel-like vistas, often clammy with fœtid nastiness, and even in the daytime pervaded with semi-darkness. Out of these again, on either side, stretch similar overarched passages full of dramatic possibilities and nocturnal dreaminess. Even a tragic and sepulchral atmosphere is not wanting.

Here crouch in groups or move with restless steps the teeming humanity of the place; the men in long, gown-like garments that reach to the ground, the last form of dress, one would say, adapted to the conditions of such a locality; the women generally muffled in shawls worn over the head.

They go and come upon their petty business, by them magnified out of all due proportion, with the hovering keenness of vultures. Sickening odours float out with an acrid penetrating quality from those ancient-looking gabardines, which are so stiff with greasy filth, it is impossible to imagine they could ever have been new and clean.

"God preserve us from uncleanness, and from coming in contact with them!" exclaims the devout Moslem, as he passes by, having washed before prayer.

Were it not for the distinct realism of certain features, these unmanlike men would seem to be phantoms of unwholesome creation, dark and vague apparitions from Gehenna.

The sharp, piercing eyes, with acquisitive gleam, and the beak-like noses, curving over the flabby, protruded lips, give an aspect of cruelty to many of the faces. The shrillness of their voices is half-choked in a rumbling gutturalness of discordant tone; and their conversation is invariably accompanied with uncouth gesticulations, in which their fingers, hands and arms, heads, and even entire bodies participate.

In one of the better parts of the quarter, frequented chiefly by the Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Jews,

was the abode of Anselmo Jacobini. The house was old and quaint, and had a superiority and something of a picturesqueness possessed by few of its neighbours. It was built of the yellowish cut stone supplied by the quarries of the surrounding hills; and curiously carved bosses and architraves, still in good preservation, ornamented the weather-chastened façade. It was further enriched by stones of a fine black, and of a deep red hue, which, being sparingly used, enhanced their preciousness. These were placed, with a simple, judicious arrangement, over the windows, adding a charming note of colour. The irregularity of the size, form, and disposition of the windows, with their Moresque lattices, greatly contributed to the effect.

Here, in the principal, hall-like room of the house, might be found, as was usual, during the greater part of the day, the old man, Anselmo Jacobini (for he now seldom went abroad, except to the synagogue), seated at a plain desk, on which lay a large open book — a fine copy of the law or Pentateuch. A mellow, subdued light sifted into the room through the curtained lattice of the wide, projecting window, and illumined the bent head, now silvery with age. The face was mostly in shadow, the back of the high chair in which he sat being turned to the window.

It was a subject which Rembrandt would have loved to paint, and, to which, perhaps, he alone could have done justice. Though the features were decidedly Jewish, they were of the best Hebrew type, and a certain refinement, perhaps of Italian origin, subdued and qualified traits which might otherwise have been of severe or unpleasing character. A lengthy beard, nearly as white as his head, swept full in front, over the black satin robe, which almost completely enveloped him, reaching to his feet. These showed from beneath it, and were encased in a pair of Turkish slippers, of soft, yellow leather, and with pointed, up-curved toes.

The richness of the entire effect was enhanced by its simplicity, and was heightened by the ancient aspect of the room, with its arched and groined roof, thick fortress-like walls, and Oriental furnishing. The

silvery white of the prophet-like hair and beard, the intense glossy black of the satin robe, and the yellow of the slippers made fine broad contrasts, which even the most unimpressive could scarcely have failed to appreciate.

The day was bright and pleasant, and a fresh breeze, yet of treacherous, sirocco-like warmth, from the direction of the Moabite hills, entered softly through the partially opened lattice. To the southeast those distant hills stood up like a rosy-purple and amethystine wall, as if barring the entrance to the Cedron Valley, though far, far beyond it, and even beyond the Dead Sea; while to the right, near by, was visible a great part of the castellated wall of the city, always a picturesque object.

The old walls of Jerusalem are an interesting study. The very stones have each an individual beauty. Carved and painted by the hand of Time, long since they left the hand of man, they put on a glory and a grace hallowed by the admiring gaze of countless generations who have dwelt beneath their protecting environment. How many times have those ancient Phœnician-cut stones been cast down and built up again! How distinctive and eloquent they are with their wide margins and sumptuous colour! Rich, warm ochre tints deepen into orange glows and pink veining, relieved by cool grays and neutral shades. Wherever it can find a foothold, the blossoming weed adds a brilliant key-note of scarlet, or a grateful accent of soft harmonious green. And behind all spreads that miraculous background of blue, the clear, cloudless sky of Palestine.

As the old man arose and stood in the window recess, something of all this must have entered his mind as he caught a glimpse of the great walls, for he murmured, "I will lay thy stones with fair colours." And again, "Thy servants love thy very stones."

He was evidently in a restless mood to-day, for, having more than once returned to his reading, he, from time to time, would arise and pace the stone-paved floor, to and fro, over the rare, antique Persian rugs

which strewed it with their luxurious thickness and concordant arabesqueries. Many of these wonderful specimens of Oriental art had been used by Mohammedans in public and private worship. Some of them had been taken out of the mosques.

The touch of the rugs had to some extent a soothing effect upon him. He enjoyed feeling his foot sink in their velvety depths; while he found the fantastic patterns, wrought in subdued harmonies and rare contrasts of colour, a solace and a pleasure to the eye.

But was there not more than this? Was it not possible he felt a virtue, — an effluence of sanctity, — a mysterious psychic aura or influence proceed from those ancient seggâdehs, — prayer-mats from which had ascended to the one true God thousands of adoring invocations and praises?

After taking a further turn or two of the room, he would come back to his desk with a certain relief, and resume his reading; but only again presently to push the book from him with an unsatisfied expression.

Could it be that those Moslem prayer carpets gave him more comfort than the fivefold book of Moses, with its anathemas and exacting legalities?

"I ought to have had a letter to-day," he said, thinking aloud to himself, after the manner of persons who have lived much alone. "I wonder if that lazy Oriental has n't forgotten to call for the mail. It would be just like him; though he knows how anxious I am."

He crossed the room, and threw open the door.

"Selim! Selim!" he called in an irritated voice.

There was no reply.

He then clapped his hands repeatedly, after the Eastern manner of summoning servants, but only with a like result.

"I really believe the fellow has fallen asleep," he said. "Just like him. And I cannot find my bell. No doubt he has hidden it away, so that I cannot call him. There is no knowing these Moslems. They are equal to anything. Sons of Belial, even though they are circumcised."

His search for the bell, however, at length resulted in his finding it on one of the koursis — the inlaid octagonal stands of Damascus adorning the room. Seizing the bell, he rang it violently and repeatedly.

"After all, the bell was in the right place. I have wronged him," he said contritely.

From a remote quarter of the house came Selim's answering cry. And soon appeared in the doorway a young man of attractive appearance, clad in the loose-flowing trousers of the East, and wearing a citron-coloured embroidered vest beneath a jacket similarly ornamented, and of a subdued blue shade. On his finely-poised head he wore a crimson tarboosh, rakishly set at the back, and permitting a goodly proportion of his glossy, blue-black hair to appear in front. A sash of crimson silk striped with gold encircled his waist, while his feet were enclosed in high-laced canvas shoes, a European innovation. He had altogether an insinuating air about him; and though, no doubt, quite youthful, was as fully developed as are most young men of twenty-five in the West. His eyes were uncommonly large and lustrous; and he used them most effectively. They were true indicators of his lingual powers; for he could command the use of several foreign languages, at least in a smattering way.

Standing in the doorway, he pushed aside the portière and made salaam, raising, as usual, his hand successively to his breast, mouth and forehead, with such a grace as is unknown to the Occidental, and which one never wearies of witnessing, especially in the courteous little children of the land.

It was evidently difficult for his master to be angry with him. After an attempt or two at it, the frown disappeared from his brow.

"I have been calling for you till I am hoarse, Selim. Where have you been? I really believe you have been asleep."

"No, no, Signor! I was only in the courtyard."

"And what were you doing there? But no matter."

The old man broke off abruptly, while the slim young servant, almost as full of sinuosities as a serpent

or a lizard, remained standing, with folded arms, in the most gracefully patient attitude imaginable, awaiting further questioning, without the least appearance of anxiety.

"What is the use of tempting him to speak falsely?" said Jacobini, aside.

The astute servant watched his eyes, as though he read his very thoughts.

"Did you call at the post-office this morning?"

This time the old man spoke aloud and rather sternly.

"Yes, yes, Signor! I was there the first thing after the Turkish post came in, and I waited till it was given out. They take a long time to sort it, you know. I had already called and inquired at the Austrian post."

"And was there nothing for me?"

"Nothing, Signor."

"It is very strange. I ought to have had a letter."

"Yes, yes, Signor; I told them so, and made them look a second time; but there was naught."

The old man sighed, resuming his seat, and leaning his head on his hand with a dejected air.

"Perhaps the next mail will bring it," said Selim, sympathetically, seeing his master's disappointment.

The old man did not seem to hear him.

"That is all," he said. "In future come and tell me at once whether there are or are not letters for me. Shut the door."

"I cannot expect much attention from the Spollatos," he presently said to himself, after Selim had departed. "It would be too much to look for, under the circumstances, I suppose. And yet I think Leone might have —"

He suddenly ceased, his voice trembling and failing.

"My nephew — my own sister's son," he continued, "he ought to have some feeling for me. But prejudice is hard to overcome. It is especially strong where pertaining to race or to caste, and where it has become a habit — a fixed idea for generations."

He stroked his long beard in a way peculiar to him when he was agitated.

"Perhaps I wrong him," he resumed, in a more cheerful tone. "He may be on his way to see me, at this very moment."

A loud knock at the door interrupted his self-communings. Selim had returned, and announced that the Rabbi Sloman was waiting below and wished to see the Signor. Would he see him?

"By all means. Let the rabbi come up."

CHAPTER VI

A VENERABLE old man of mild countenance, diminutive stature and attenuated frame, slightly bent with the weight of his many years, and who was attired in the dress of a Jewish chief rabbi, entered the room, accompanied by two other Hebrews, one of whom was his secretary or dragoman. The rather refined-looking old man was the Rabbi Sloman, whose name was probably a corruption of Solomon.

As Anselmo Jacobini was reputed to be rich, at least in Jerusalem, and was, moreover, generous in his charities, he was treated with great respect by all who came in contact with him, and especially by the Jews. The chief rabbis frequently came to consult and advise with the retired banker; and he was sure to be addressed as Signor by all who had any object to gain with him. His Italian life had given him a certain freedom of opinion in regard to many of the more rigid and outworn observances of his religion, which in any one of less authority and of less wealth would not have been condoned. But in this case it was advisable to wink at much that could not have been permitted in another.

In Jerusalem there is in general such an abject submission on the part of the Jews in good standing to everything even of the most tyrannical character emanating from their head rabbis and pertaining to the Mosaic law and their religion, as to be scarcely credible. According to the more rigid observances of the Sab-

bath, for instance, during the holy day an umbrella cannot be opened even in the most deluging rain, or in the most scorching sun; a handkerchief or a piece of money cannot be carried in the pocket; no cooking must be done; nor can a match be lighted, nor a cigarette be smoked. Hebrews who would be Hebrews indeed, must discard all European dress and wear the peculiar garb of the Israelite. They must not shave, or even trim their beards or side locks, lest they offend against the law which prescribes, "Thou shalt not mar the corners of thy beard." The peculiar and almost invariably filthy garments seen on this people, on every side are a positive testimony; so are the disgusting corkscrew ringlets, known as peahs, worn on each side of the men's faces.

The degree in which Jacobini was regarded as a specially privileged character therefore must not be underestimated.

On the other hand, it must be confessed that this extremely rigid interpretation of the law, entering into the most minute details of everyday life with an oppressiveness almost unbearable, engenders on the part of many of its pretended observers a secret shirking of the odious obedience. There is in every direction a setting about to evade and shift responsibility. The Jews, from of old, have ever been past-masters in the art of evasion. Even the rabbis are known to go down to the market on the Sabbath, and purchase what they choose, with impunity, but are careful not to complete the transaction by paying for what they buy. This is delayed till the following day, which being the Christian holy day is all the more agreeable for the purpose. Such action would seem to most unbiassed thinkers simply what is described, in language more graphic than elegant, as "Whipping the Devil round the stump." Yet their religious law permits it.

The Rabbi Sloman had, on this occasion, much to consult about, and many charitable schemes to recommend; and Anselmo Jacobini listened to him with all due patience, yielding a not ungenerous response. They spoke of the rapid influx of the Jews; their

persecution in Russia and other countries, and the necessity of providing homes and support for those afflicted, poverty-stricken people, until one might well think the subject exhausted, if exhausted it could be; yet still the chief rabbi lingered. He seemed to hesitate at delivering some further message, till admonished by an expressive gesture from the Rabbi Ben Cohen who accompanied him.

It had always been a sore trial to the neighbouring Jews that Jacobini employed as his personal attendant and dragoman a Moslem Syrian — an unbeliever, instead of one of the Lord's people. This dereliction of duty, the rabbi now, though with some misgivings, undertook to point out, to the great annoyance of Jacobini, who very properly considered it was a private matter, pertaining to himself, and in which the rabbi had no right to interfere.

"You might have one of your own co-religionists, one of the sons of Israel," continued the rabbi, after opening the subject, "instead of this profane follower of the False Prophet."

"Ah! Indeed?" gasped Jacobini, controlling his displeasure but imperfectly.

"It is an occasion of much offence to our people, and, it seems to me, justly so."

"Excuse me, but I do not see that they have any reason to be offended in the matter. I simply exercise the right to choose my own servant. If I prefer one man to another, it is my privilege. They have no right to call me to an account for so doing."

Jacobini spoke with decided warmth, and as if determined to end the matter.

"True, true; but consider, it is not the custom of our people to do this thing. When you might aid one of your own brethren — and —"

The rabbi, a most amiable man, paused. He feared that Jacobini, from what he had said, and his angry glance, was not likely to be moved, and he wisely preferred not to irritate him by saying all he had intended to say.

"The matter is one not apt to be mended, but rather

to grow worse. What would they say to find me inviting a Christian under my roof — into intimate association with me?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed the rabbi.

"Nevertheless, it is likely to be so."

"How may this be?"

"I am expecting my nephew, my sister's son, to come and visit me — perhaps to stay with me for the remainder of my days, which may not be long upon the earth. He may arrive at any time. I do not know. He ought to be with me now."

The old man's voice trembled as he spoke the last words; while the two rabbis took snuff from an enormous silver box, glancing significantly at one another.

"Your nephew — your sister's son," repeated the Rabbi Sloman; "then he must be a son of Israel."

"Surely, surely," coincided the companion rabbi, Ben Cohen, who blew his nose on a soiled blue cotton handkerchief, and leaned forward to help himself to another liberal pinch of the snuff.

"It does not follow, apparently," replied Jacobini. "His father was of the Spollato family, a Christian, or, as you would say, one of the Nazarenes; and my nephew was brought up a Christian."

"He has never had the ancient rite performed upon him, then?" responded the Rabbi Sloman interrogatively.

"Never, so far as I know."

An almost comical expression overspread the features of Jacobini as the subject rather grotesquely presented itself to him in connection with Leone and the pride and exclusiveness of the Spollatos.

"Ah, that comes of the evil of mixed marriages!" exclaimed the Rabbi Ben Cohen.

"Doubtless. In all probability my nephew would look on it, as do most Christians, as a barbarous mutilation — a savage rite."

"I have heard the uncircumcised sons of Belial jest about our holy things; and I know what is in their corrupt natures. They are full of all uncleanness and wantonness. But what can you expect?"

It was the Rabbi Ben Cohen who spoke, and with a peculiar vindictiveness apparently wanting to the chief rabbi. His hooked nose, of monstrous proportions and shape, gave an indescribably malicious aspect to a face which otherwise also possessed in a pronounced degree unpleasant characteristics. There could be no mistaking, for an instant, his idiosyncrasies.

"But now, no doubt, you hope to bring the young man to the true belief. Under your influence much may be expected," interposed the Rabbi Sloman.

"I fear it is not reasonable to expect too much from my nephew in that direction. Had my poor sister lived long enough to instil into his mind the lessons of our holy religion, how different it might all have been. But she died when Leone was a mere infant."

"You have a duty upon you in this, which you should not lightly set aside. In any way that I can help in the good work you can command me. I shall only be too glad to use my efforts with the young man."

"Thank you, Rabbi, thank you. I fear he would look upon all our interest with disdain."

"It is a bitter lesson, a sore warning," reiterated the Rabbi Ben Cohen. "One cannot be too strict in prohibiting such marriages. There must be no leniency."

"Yes, there must be no leniency," repeated the chief rabbi.

Jacobini had risen while Ben Cohen spoke, and, standing in the balcony-like window, looked toward the Mount of Olives, whose southwesterly slopes were thickly set with Hebrew graves. The innumerable tombstones, in general of the very rudest make, some of the oldest being, indeed, hardly discernible from the unhewn rock itself, stood out on the face of the Mount, in the brazen glare of the Palestine sun, like a leprous mass of eruption. There was scarcely a tree or a shrub to shade or shield them. Higher up the mountain, and below, and on either side were scattered clumps of dusky olive-trees; but the graves were utterly exposed, with an almost dreadful ugliness, a horrible nakedness, to the blazing eye of the sun. Yet there were few of even the rudest of those gravestones that some loving hand had not marked

with brief memorial inscription in the unmistakable radical characters that their ancestors had brought back with them from their captivity in Babylon, where they had lost their ancient alphabet.

Often had Jacobini stood by this window in the night-time and watched the torches as they flitted over the hillside.

"Another poor Israelite laid away," he would mutter, sorrowfully shaking his head. "Well may they bury their dead at night, hiding their misery in the darkness. Surely no people have been afflicted as they have been afflicted."

A half-suppressed sigh parted the old man's lips as he now stood gazing on the dismal view. He was weary of the conversation, and would willingly have changed it.

"There is not such another sight in the whole world," he said. "Poor Hebrews; it is here we come, at the last, to lay our bones. There is no compromising with death there — no pretence at beautifying. Perhaps it is as well that it is so."

"Surely it is well," said the chief rabbi, hardly comprehending Jacobini. "Every true son of Israel naturally desires to be buried in the sacred spot. You and I — we all desire it, when the time comes. But, excuse me, will you not consider what we have spoken to you regarding your servant, this Selim, this unbelieving Moslem?" he continued, returning to the charge. "Could you change him for one of the seed of Jacob, it would remove a great cause of offence, and be a source of peace and comfort to yourself. Ben Cohen and I have talked the matter over; and we have selected a man for you in every way suitable, one who will give you every satisfaction."

"He is Nathan, brother of the rabbi's dragoman," added Ben Cohen.

A flush of anger tinged for a moment the pale face of Jacobini. His eyes, which had been lowered, were suddenly lifted, showing a dangerous gleam in their dark depths.

"Thank you," he replied, with a haughty inclination of the head; "I am greatly obliged to you for your

thoughtful interest. The truth is, however, that I have taken a liking to this unbeliever — this Selim. In spite of all his shortcomings, there is something about him that pleases me; and, now that I am expecting my nephew, who doubtless would prefer Selim to an Israelite, I will make no change, at least for the present."

"You surprise me!" exclaimed Ben Cohen, and suddenly stopped.

Both the reverends were silent with chagrin.

"Yes," added Jacobini, "I am sure my nephew would prefer Selim."

The rabbis saw that there was no use in further argument, and, having already partaken of the usual Oriental refreshments, consisting of conserves, liqueurs and coffee, which Selim had produced, they, after a few commonplace and complimentary remarks, took their leave.

"You will, at least, consider the matter, and let us know," they said, tenacious of their authority, and bowing themselves out.

It was a relief to Jacobini as he returned their salutations.

"I really think it best for me to retain Selim. I believe he would suit Leone far better than the Hebrew. Besides I hardly care to place myself so utterly under the surveillance of those intrusive people. There is some limit to forbearance." These were the conclusions of Jacobini, spoken to himself when again alone in his chamber. He had given the rabbis no promise to consider the matter.

Selim, after the manner of the Oriental, with eye and ear to keyhole, had learned the principal object of the rabbis' visit; and now, redoubling his attentions and fascinations with Jacobini, as a consequence held a higher place than ever in his regard. The subtle Syrian, like all his people, knew to perfection how to make himself agreeable, and thoroughly ingratiated himself with his master.

What graceful gravity, what dignified reserve blended with every motion of the lithe body of Selim, fully conscious of his good looks and handsome form, while carefully concealing all appearance of that consciousness!

How well he knew how to bestow upon his master those delicate little attentions that are almost nameless, yet which are always acceptable! He called himself Jacobini's son, while he endeared himself to him more and more. As he came and went with panther-like tread, his physical fascinations had no little to do in holding him in the good graces of the old man, who actually liked him all the better for the attempt of the rabbis to deprive him of him.

But the climax was reached when on the following morning the debonair young Moslem brought Jacobini the long-looked-for letter from Leone. Nothing could exceed the delight of his master, who somehow associated the entire circumstance with Selim, giving him a handsome present in the first exuberance of his gratification.

"And now, Selim, you must watch the arrivals at the hotels," said his master, as he adjusted his glasses, and pored over Leone's brief letter. "My nephew may reach Jerusalem any day, and we must pay him every attention, and not let him feel like a stranger in a strange land. I depend on you for this. You must let me know the moment he arrives."

As Selim bowed his head in sign of acquiescence, his eyes sparkled with the peculiar light — that brilliant radiance that is seldom seen at such perfection in any but Oriental orbs. This token of pleasure was repeated in the superb smile that parted his scarlet lips, showing his beautiful teeth, as even and white as a double string of choice pearls. He was a sound, wholesome fellow from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet; and he felt the warm animal life within him, or rather it made itself felt to him with an intensity that would not be denied. The passionate glow was almost visible in him; and, as in most of his people, seldom failed to impress those who came in contact with him.

Next to receiving honour or reward in his own person, there is nothing that so thoroughly gratifies an Oriental as to be made the dispenser or vehicle of another's bounty or ceremonious respect. It transfigures him. A sublimity of exaltation possesses him; and, for the

time being, he is another man — the personification of some princely embassade. Backsheesh, the largess of the East, is a stupendous and almost formidable institution, calculated to astonish if not overwhelm the unprepared Occidental; but ceremonious courtesy as observed by Asiatics is vastly more, — it is the very life-blood of the people.

Thus Selim's joy was doubly fulfilled.

CHAPTER VII

THE sun had set behind the hills of Judæa, and glow after glow rose and vanished successively in that arch of the heavens overhanging the Holy City, circling the entire horizon with rainbow-like bands of glorious colours, — with a mystic splendour such as is seen in no other part of the world. Through the gorge of the Cedron the Moabite mountains showed, like a great purple battlement with pink and crimson buttresses; and the olive-trees on the Mount of Olives caught the reflected glory on the subdued green of their foliage. So golden was the sunset that it seemed as if the sun, instead of disappearing behind the hills, had melted in the heavens.

A stranger who had arrived in Jerusalem that evening stood with several of the other guests gazing from the flat roof of their hotel at the wondrous sight, with an interest that was only natural; for even a Nile sunset could not exceed this, — no, it could not approach it. The almost complete dying out of the glory, succeeded by a death-like ashen hue, followed by the revival of the resplendent colours, and this recurring six or seven times, formed not the least remarkable feature of the magnificent display.

There was something about the strange young man that instantly attracted the attention; and yet it was difficult for his fellow-travellers to decide as to what nationality he belonged. Dressed with much good

taste, though in the height of the French fashion, his grace and dignity of movement suggested the Greek or the so-called "civilised" Oriental. Perhaps one might think he had a mixture of both in his veins with a predominating dash of the Italian. As he paced up and down on the extensive roof of the hotel, there was almost a touch of melancholy in the pronounced features of his face that had in it a reminiscence of the eternally sad Antinous. Was he sorry for his sins? And, again, as one looked closer, glimpses of an older race might be detected, and the suggestion arise that here, perhaps, was such a man as Cleopatra or even Bathsheba might have smiled upon.

One thing was certain — he would not have failed to return that smile with interest. There was, with all its refinement and polish, a simplicity of audacity about him which told you, in unmistakable language, that he would have the courage of his passion.

All sorts and conditions of men, and of women too, come up to Jerusalem. One can only wonder what attraction it can possess for some of them. And the wonder is increased by finding that many of those anomalous characters are frequently not merely transient visitors, but that they come to the Holy City to make it their abiding place.

Allusion is not now made to those poor old Jews, who, in their indomitable superstition, drag their miserable worn-out bodies to the place, that they may die within the walls, and be buried where so many of their race and of their forefathers lie, — on the scarred and sun-bleached slopes of the Mount of Olives. The fanatic or "crank" of all nationalities and of all religions finds his way to Zion, imbued with the idea that he has a "mission" which he alone can carry out. Or some dim notion flickers in the addled brain that here may be found that peace and joy in believing, which he has failed to find elsewhere; or that prayers said here have a hundredfold efficacy.

But such a young man as this, whether Italian, Greek, or Oriental, to all appearance full of worldly-mindedness and unrestrained instincts, whose whole being seems an

embodiment of self-gratification, — he, the pleasure-loving fellow, with sensuous if refined tastes, the resultant of a long line of warm-blooded ancestry, — what object has brought him to the ancient ruin-heap? It would not be easy for the general beholder to answer. And guesses are idle.

Men are not always what they seem. At any rate, to-night, some ancient memory, drawn perhaps from a long-forgotten past, surged within him; an old feeling for which he had no recognition was resuscitated and moved him in a way surprising to himself.

What archaic longings lurk in the blood, — what dispositions lie hidden there, waiting for the appointed time to wake up and assert themselves, whether for good or evil. He thought of his Hebraic ancestry, and tried to feel backward through it to the remote beginning of the things that lay before him. Centuries returned, passing beneath his mental gaze, and vanished as they had come. At last he grew dizzy at the complicated scenes he could not grasp, and turned from them.

Looking toward the Turkish barracks, on the near slope of Zion's hill, he saw the flat roof was covered with living, moving objects. He might well imagine it the continuation of the visions of his brain. It was the soldiers at their evening prayer. The greater part of a regiment was there, Moslems, all praying at once. He could see distinctly, against the flame-coloured sky, every genuflection and prostration, the bowing of the heads, the outstretched hands, — not a movement was lost. How wonderful it was! Nearly an entire regiment worshipping at once. And every man of them, before ascending to pray, had performed the ablution, and purified himself, with water, of all uncleanness; where necessary, carrying out the abstersions known as the Istingâ and the Ghusl masuun, as required by the Mohammedan religion.

"Was there ever such another sight!" he exclaimed. "Does any other people or belief present a scene like this?"

He was lost in wonder at it, as well he might be. Every night, at sunset, this was repeated.

His reverie was broken by the ringing of the last dinner-bell. He looked around him, and saw that he was alone. All the other guests who had been on the roof had gone below. It was already commencing to grow dusk, and the stars had begun to appear.

Searching for the narrow stone stairway by which he must descend, he walked the entire length of the house-top, which was paved with broad stone slabs, and with, here and there, a low hemispherical dome rising to break the monotony of the flat surface. Reaching the foot of the flight, he found himself upon the wide second landing, which was like a *loggia*, and open on the southward and eastward to air and sky. Below, laving the very base of the building, lay the darkling Pool of Hezekiah, with an occasional reflection of light mirrored in its waters from the houses rising out of it on each of its four sides, and forming its inclosing bounds. He noticed again the quaint irregular structures with their curious, oddly-disposed windows and their bracketed balconies overhanging the water. Here and there, a tuft of hyssop or some other ragged mendicant plant grew out of the walls, or a bit of scarlet drapery, brilliantly visible by the lights behind it, made a pleasant note of colour in the fast-gathering gloom; and, on the right, one palm-tree raised aloft its plumy head.

Lifting his eyes, he beheld, in the background, beyond all, the entire front of the Mount of Olives, spread out like a panorama before him. On its southwesterly slopes he could still detect the clumps of olive-trees, and even those strange spotty marks dotting its surface, and which he knew to be Hebrew graves. Beneath, this side the Cedron, lay the Temple site, covered by the Mosque of Omar, hiding the Garden of Gethsemane behind it.

What unspeakable peace broods over all!

But what is that sudden vapourous light, like a beacon-fire, shooting up into the heavens from behind the Mount, becoming each moment more intense in its brightness, till, at last, every undulation of the entire outline of the historic hill is clearly defined against the sky? There is a golden core to the light, which rises and expands. All at once, full-born, it leaps into the air, free of earth, im-

maculate, spectre-like. Glory of glories, it is the virgin of the heavens, — the full-orbed moon!

It is a sight never to be forgotten, — that moon-rise over Olivet.

What wonder that he lingers to drink in the serene majestic beauty of the scene! His peculiar nature made him keenly alive to all such sights. This sort of enjoyment was as necessary to him as the more material gratification of his bodily appetites. He laved in it, — revelled in it.

He almost started, as if awaked from a dream, when a waiter approached to remind him that dinner was served; and, entering his room and making some hasty preparations, he went down to the *salle à manger*.

In the entire world, excepting Palestine, there is not, perhaps, another dining-room similar to the one he now entered. As in all the rooms in the house, the floor was paved with stone flags; and the thickness of the walls in which the arched windows were sunk suggested a fortress rather than a dwelling. The groined ceiling and the pilasters gave it an ecclesiastical aspect — the character of the private chapel of some nobleman or king. This effect was heightened by its being principally lighted by lamps of antique design, suspended by chains from overhead. Both walls and ceiling were frescoed in colours; the former with landscapes, the latter with trailing vines.

The largest and most pretentious of the paintings covered the wall towards the upper end of the room, and did not fail to draw the attention and wondering criticism of the traveller. It was a composite design, an Eastern landscape, in which it was difficult to determine as to whether the round face of the presiding luminary was meant to represent the sun or the moon. The pyramids of Ghizeh, the glorious columns of the temple at Baalbec, and an oasis with palms, in the desert of Sahara, were confusingly combined with the Tomb of Absalom in the Valley of Jehosaphat, while in the background a river resembling the Mississippi rolled, like a ribbon of silver, at the foot of a range of mountains suggesting the Himalayas. A decrepit, mangy-looking lion crouched among the ruins of the foreground.

How many a weary traveller has found this unfortunate composition a welcome relief, as affording a topic for conversation, and an easy subject for his wit and raillery! So it was on this occasion. As Leone Spollato (for it was he) took his place at the table, the threadbare subject was again under discussion. It was a target always set up, ready to render comparatively sharp the blunt arrows of the most witless critic.

He found himself seated next to a young lady whom he had seen on the roof, and had especially noticed as being good-looking. This last mentioned fact was quite sufficient to put him on his mettle, and bring out his best points, or those considered such by the fair sex. It stimulated him like some rare wine. Under such circumstances his manner visibly underwent a transformation. Every motion had an elegance and grace that intensified all that was attractive about him. In justice to him it must be said there was no effort in this; it was all natural; and he was often quite unconscious of it.

Uncommonly attentive in assisting the young lady at table, the ice was quickly broken, and they launched into conversation with wonderful ease. He undoubtedly had a remarkable gift in such cases, and seldom failed to impress the so-called weaker vessels with a certain admiration for him. That the result was not wanting in the present instance, he felt he had reason to flatter himself. The sympathetic eyes sought his face with that peculiar expression he had learned so well to know, and in which he thought he could hardly be mistaken.

The young lady spoke English, in which Leone was proficient; and presently he discovered she was an American. Handsomely dressed, and wearing rich jewels, there were other correspondent signs whereby the conclusion was reached that she was probably wealthy.

He had heard her addressed as Miss Warren, and her lady friend and companion had called her Augusta, therefore he knew her name. But, it need scarcely be said, he was by far too well-bred not to understand that this would give him no right to use it in speaking to her at this stage of their acquaintance.

The general conversation of the company had drifted from the most convenient, crude, and composite of fresco paintings, and had at length reached that venerable subject, the Jew. There were few of those present who, having made a short visit in Jerusalem, did not feel competent to dispose of the ancient city and people in a brief set of jaunty off-hand sentences.

Yet, it could not be denied, that many a practical or appropriate thought found succinct expression in this mixed company; many a word of common sense and keen appreciation floated out on the stagnant atmosphere of a land not given to common sense in general.

Some spoke of the overcrowding of the Holy Sepulchre church with relics of doubtful authenticity, associated with historic acts which could not have taken place there, thus pandering to the ignorant superstition of the multitude. Then they brought forward the contradictory sacred places and legends of the Greek Church, in opposition to the Latins, throwing discredit on all. Two wealthy bankers from Moscow did not hesitate to proclaim they regretted having come to Jerusalem.

"It has spoiled our faith! It has spoiled our faith!" they continued to repeat, in evident distress.

There was much to be said as to the abundant display of orders and so-called decorations.

"When I saw Tom, Dick, and Harry decorated, and even the guides wearing those symbols of suppositious honour," said one young man, "I looked around, expecting to see the porters and donkeys decorated, but was greatly disappointed, as I considered them much better entitled to the distinction than some of those who had received it."

"You are quite correct," replied an elderly gentleman, who seemed to have spent some time in the city. "Among the things most to be admired in Jerusalem are the porters and the donkeys. There is a certain likeness and relationship between them — those hard-worked and poorly-paid fellow-labourers. The more I know them the more I honour them. I cannot but feel a certain respect for them beyond the common. What enormous loads those Coptic and Nubian porters carry! It passes belief.

As to the donkeys, they are the best in the world, excepting perhaps those of Cairo."

"The trouble about those orders of merit and decorations," added another speaker, "is generally this: the worthless, or rather unworthy, strain after and usually succeed in getting them, while the really meritorious and the great disregard them, or despise them on account of their promiscuous bestowal."

Leone, though understanding and speaking English, joined but little in the general conversation. He satisfied himself with paying quiet attentions to Miss Warren and her companion, addressing an occasional comment to the same ladies.

After dinner he again found himself in Miss Warren's company. He certainly had made himself agreeable to her, and she did not scruple to let him perceive it, and to encourage him in further manifestations of a similar nature.

He having mentioned the beauty of the view by moonlight from the roof of the hotel, she at once saw the romantic character of the position, and expressed so great a desire to behold the charming effects as he had described them, that he could do no less than offer to accompany her there. She was not satisfied till they ascended to the highest point — upon the flat roof. The full clear moonlight had performed the work of enchantment with the scene. The silvery transparent flood, a vast overflowing lake of light, submerged everything. It was a transfiguration — a spiritualising of each object they had already beheld in the warm, voluptuous sunlight. The dullest mind could not but have some appreciation of it. And these two who were now enjoying the entrancing sight, were anything but dull. No doubt, too, the agreeable companionship was not without its effect on both of them.

"How remarkably beautiful! How wonderfully fine! Far beyond the view by daylight!"

These were some of Miss Warren's admiring, if somewhat commonplace exclamations, as she and Leone lingered on the roof, and tried to make out and designate the more important places and buildings in the world-renowned scene.

To the westward the Tower of David, on the slopes of Mount Zion, lifted its great central mass of battlemented walls and castle against the sky. On the opposite slopes showed the two bluish domes of the chief synagogues, blanched by the moonlight. Immediately beneath the spot where the young people stood, the sombre Pool of Hezekiah, reflected on its motionless surface the unbroken image of the twin domes (Latin and Greek) of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, looking down upon it from the northward. Tapering shafts of variously-shaped minarets, here and there shot up in isolated pride, as if moulded out of pure silver. Farther away, to the eastward, on the lesser height of Mount Moriah, the extensive Temple Enclosure spread itself in dignified repose, surrounding the most beautiful dome of all, that of the Mosque of Omar, marking the site of the Holy Temple, the spot where the visible presence of God manifested itself in the Shekinah, above the Mercy Seat — the Holy of Holies; and beyond all rose Olivet, its highest height crowned with the towering Russian belfry, dominating everything. Turning again to the westward, they saw, beyond the whitewashed walls of the Turkish barracks, and covering part of the northerly summit of Mount Zion, the Garden of King Herod, now belonging to the Armenian church, its dark cypresses and pines with a palm or two making a refreshing spot for the eye to rest upon. They could catch what they took to be a glimmer of the hills of Judæa through the trees in the Herodian garden. With what suggestive memories and thoughts of the deepest import all they beheld abounded! If there had been any taint of frivolity in the heart or upon the lips of either Leone or Miss Warren it could not but dissolve and disappear in the presence of such surroundings as these. Silence fell upon both of them. Leone was especially affected, — strangely so for one like him.

"And this," he mused, "is Jerusalem, the desired of all the earth."

He thought of his mother and her people. This had been their home — their nest, ages ago. Here they had had their origin. He was closely allied to all this, whether he would or not. It was in his blood. He shuddered.

It was a mixed feeling. Not a hint of it must be conveyed to Miss Warren. Yet what a fascination it had for him. It drew him to it with a magnet-like force he could scarcely repel.

An irresistible desire seized him to walk, down among those lights and shadows, under the Tower of David, and through the arched streets. If these places had for others a sanctity and a weird charm, should they not have for him a thousandfold more interest, an immeasurable attraction and delight? The Jew was growing strong within him and gaining the ascendency. That which, through his prejudice, he had abhorred and loathed, had clutched him and was compelling him — hugging him to its heart. Was it a bear-like grip that would not be shaken off?

"You are remarkably silent. I would give much to know what you are thinking of," said Miss Warren, noticing his enrapt expression.

"I was only giving way to the feeling that I wanted to see those places near by — to walk those streets — to touch some of those objects and satisfy myself of their reality. And I want to do it now — this moment."

He spoke in grave, measured tones.

"Strange," she said. "I have the very same feeling. Pray let me go with you. Let us go at once."

"Is it not too late for you?" he asked, in simple surprise, not understanding such independence.

"No, no," she said. "I assure you I do not mind it. Nor do I consider it late. I believe you have infected me with your longing. I, too, want to walk among those mysterious dreamy places, this very night. Do not disappoint me."

"I shall be only too well pleased to have your company," he murmured.

He descended through the long confusing corridors and stairways to the heavy bolted gateway and the street, she rashly accompanying him.

"What is to be said?" he thought. "It is not for me to say."

The porter, seeing them approach, rubbed his eyes, and shook off a little of his drowsy state, as he arose

from his divan, and, drawing back the bolt, opened one leaf of the gate to let them through. He awoke sufficiently to ask them if they wished for a guide with a lantern.

But this would have spoiled everything for the romantic pair; and they quickly protested they had no need for such an attendant.

They being forthwith enlightened as to the fact that the law required lanterns to be carried at night, and that it was a necessity in the dark and narrow streets, they explained they were going but a little way, and would be back in a few minutes. As Leone, while he spoke, dropped a piece of silver into the porter's hand, the man had nothing more to say. He had done his duty.

It was with a strange sensation, yet one of relief, that they heard the iron-sheathed gate close behind them, as if shutting them out from the last connection with civilisation into the ancient weird city.

Their first experience on emerging into the semi-darkness, which was only broken here and there at wide intervals, by yellow, dimly-flickering oil lamps, was stumbling into a group of scavenger dogs encumbering the narrow walk. The lazy brutes did not attempt to get out of the way, and continued their apparently unbroken slumber as if nothing had occurred to disturb them. Sleep is a congenial condition of the land and of the things that are in the land. It might be called the Land of Nod.

Large numbers of these pariah-dogs, belonging to no one, infest the city; they also are found in packs, at night, on the roads outside the walls, where, when famished with hunger, they are apt to become dangerous and attack a lonely traveller, as they have somewhat of the nature of the wolf in them.

The effect upon Miss Warren was to make her cling the more closely to Leone's arm; and a mutual *approche* ensued. The ludicrousness of their position in the midst of the inert dogs awoke the risible faculties of the fair American and her cavalier, and they ended in a hearty laugh at their predicament. It must be confessed

this comical affair contributed to dissipate some of the graver feelings with which they might otherwise have contemplated the scenes through which they moved.

They passed under sepulchre-like archways, through dusky deserted streets, singularly impressive from their silence, and their emptiness of the dense crowd that had thronged them all day. During their entire ramble they scarcely met more than two or three belated pedestrians.

Once a policeman glanced at them inquiringly; but, perceiving they were respectable foreigners, made no inquisition.

The policemen of Jerusalem, armed with swords, have a general resemblance to the French *gendarme.* They are a comparatively recent acquisition; and seem well-behaved, polite, gentlemanly fellows. The Moslems, in referring to them quietly remark with sublime equanimity: "We have got them for your benefit (meaning for the strangers and foreign residents who are Christians). We have no need of them."

Few such officials, anywhere, act with better judgment, of which the present instance may be taken as a case in point — the pair of strollers being unprovided with the required lantern, and therefore subject to investigation, were allowed to pass without hindrance or examination. Like other policemen we might mention, they know whom not to arrest.

It was late when Leone and Miss Warren returned to the hotel. But the porter was ready and waiting to open to them. Leone's bounty had made the man his fast adherent.

The friendship of Leone and Miss Warren, who were strangers only a few hours before, had ripened at an extraordinary rate; so much so, that the name of the Count Leone Spollato appeared on most of the young lady's programmes and plans in connection with her sojourn in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VIII

LIKE many a heavenly body, woman carries with her the elements of perturbation, by the very law of attraction.

Leone had been more than a week in Jerusalem, and yet had not gone near his uncle Anselmo. This state of affairs may well be charged to the fascinations of Miss Warren.

He had escaped the inquiries and scrutiny of the subtle Selim, who, to do him justice, had made diligent search for him, not only in all the hotels of the city, but at all the convents and brotherhoods where travellers were afforded hospitality.

The difficulty in finding him arose from the fact that the ill-regulated hotel register was by most strangers a much-neglected book, and Leone, in company with a number of other visitors, had failed to record his name, which, with his title, except to a few of the guests, was quite unknown. The hotel proprietor, a native, knew him only by appearance. Selim's pompous inquiries and grandiloquent descriptions had overshot the mark. Leone remained undiscovered, and free to come and go at the sweet will of the fair stranger who had him in her train.

A certain dread or repulsion as to meeting his uncle had again settled upon him. He feared the knowledge of the relationship should spread and reach Miss Warren's ears. He would keep away from the old man for the present. A few days' postponement could matter but little. It would be easy to find some excuse or evasion afterwards, in explaining the matter to his uncle. Thus he argued himself into an apologetic if not a satisfactory estimate of his conduct.

Whatever qualms of conscience he might have felt were forgotten in the presence of the charming young creature who was not satisfied if he was not with her.

They visited, in delighted companionship, the Mosque of Omar, luxuriating in the matchless colouring of the

Damascus tiles and world-renowned mosaics, and the rare stained glass of the windows which had been ripening to that perfect mellowness for so many centuries. They were not surprised when told that an English nobleman had offered in vain thirty thousand pounds for one of the windows, for his private chapel. The chaste octagonal pile rose before them as if formed of beryl and chrysoprase and clothed with supernatural golden light, the entire the creation of the magician's wand, one stroke of which would return it to the impalpable air out of which it was born. At first sight they almost feared their very breathing would obliterate it. But it was the huge mass of rock lying in majestic repose, in the centre, beneath the Great Dome that excited their wonder and their awe. The grand simplicity of it could not but affect them, as it has affected millions of worshippers for thousands of years — ever since King Solomon built his glorious temple over it — ever since King David made his sacrifice here, at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite — yea, ever since Abraham, building an altar, offered up here his son Isaac. They saw before them the very summit of Mount Moriah — the Holy Mountain — its unhewn rock apex, upon which, according to Divine command, tool had never been lifted to pollute it, rising in all its original natural grandeur, shaming in its primeval strength the magnificence of the building that inclosed it. Through all the vicissitudes of the Holy Place, that mighty summit had made itself respected; in the midst of assaults and changes it had remained unchanged. Here was not a semblance of idolatrous worship.

"And the Jews themselves are shut out," murmured Leone, as he gazed upon the scene. "Indeed, if permitted, they would not enter, I am told, fearing to commit the unpardonable sin of putting foot upon the Holy of Holies."

"It is impossible, as one stands here," said Miss Warren, "not to sympathise with them, and pity them."

"If they would let you pity them," returned Leone. "But, it seems to me, they want no man's pity. That is a part of their obduracy."

He would have said further; but, remembering himself, he changed the subject.

Subsequently they visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and could not forbear comparing unfavorably the Christian with the Mohammedan place of worship, — the grand simplicity and scrupulous cleanliness of the latter as compared with the former. When they had seen everything worth seeing — even to the sword and spurs of Godfrey of Bouillon, and the chair in which that British princess the Empress Helena sat while directing the excavations for the finding of the cross — it was suggested that they visit the tomb cut in the rock in the garden beneath the knoll of the Prophet Jeremiah, outside of the Damascus Gate. Latterly the belief of many had strongly inclined to accept this as the true place of the crucifixion and tomb of Christ. The guide did not fail to point out to them the strong points favouring this as the locality of those great events. Had it not been called Calvary — Golgotha — the place of a skull? And, certainly, the very hill before them resembled a cranium. Jewish tradition, too, perhaps the worthiest of traditions, and the most entitled to credence in such a case, identified the spot as the ancient place of execution. Saint Paul, also, plainly says the crucifixion took place "without the gate." What gate would specially occupy his mind as "the gate," except the Damascus Gate? There are many other remarkable correspondences to the gospel narrative; and what wonder if Leone and his companion, coming from superstitious and meretricious spectacles, far from edifying, and recalling the words of the Russian bankers, found here, in these simple surroundings, the grateful relief they longed for, and with others were inclined to accept the rock tomb as "the place where they laid Him?"

These and other excursions had thrown Miss Warren and Leone much together. The influences were favourable to drawing out that which was best in each of their characters. Friendship — something more precious than friendship is apt to ripen under such circumstances.

They had scaled the Mount of Olives together, and climbed the Russian belfry with its mighty, sonorous bell "swinging slow with sullen roar." They had passed beyond the mountain to quiet Bethany, — that almost dismantled and ruined village, sorrowing among its lingering olive-trees, — and oh, how heart-appealing in its dejection! They had descended the excavations within Jerusalem, through four tiers of underground ancient buildings, to the Bethesda, the twin pools with their five porches, nigh unto the Sheep Gate, now St. Stephen's Gate; and had made a pilgrimage to Bethlehem and the fortress-like Church of the Nativity — the oldest Christian basilica in the world. If ordinary, everyday experiences have power to touch the soul and influence the life, how much more should these? Leone confessed he did not think he could have been so moved. But the son of Italy, although not overburdened with religion, like many a son of other lands, was full of emotions and sympathies that survive neglect and ill-usage, — that live after we think we have murdered them. He had gone the rounds of the ancient city, as he well knew, chiefly for the pleasure of Miss Warren's society: he had been the recipient of more than he had bargained for. The sacred sights had mellowed their feelings, and while drawing them closer together, had given a different colour to their thoughts.

The possibilities that lie hidden in man — and in woman, for that matter — there is no calculating on. With the wantonness that has a genesis more or less remote, and that stands ready to come to the front often when least expected, bides under the same roof, the devotional and religious sentiments and aspirations. It is like the Arab love-song, in which we find the most sensual and even abandoned ideas associated with or developing spiritual or religious concepts. But the soft tones of the angels' voices too often are drowned in the carnal chorus. The serpent is represented as delighting to hide in the grass, or amid banks of lilies and roses. The heart of man is described as deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

There was a restiveness under the religious feelings which could not be entirely concealed; but which, perhaps, was less apparent in Leone than in Miss Warren. She had a quick and clever tongue, which would not be repressed. Even the Patriarch of the Greek Church did not escape it. His Blessedness, always so kind, generous and good, had very graciously received them when they called, accompanied by a high ecclesiastic. They were greatly impressed with the noble man — a prince of the Church — and his interesting surroundings. As they sat in the great reception-room, which was mildly heated by a large antique brazier standing in the centre, the walls adorned with portraits of most of the crowned heads of Europe, the visitors had been served with refreshments, in the Oriental style, — consisting of a conserve of rose-leaves, partaken of with gold spoons, a tiny glass of maraschino, and finally a cup of black Turkish coffee presented in a gold filigree holder.

"He is a magnificent man," remarked Miss Warren, on leaving. "He is like a living cathedral, in which his profound voice is the organ." Then she flippantly added: "His nose is a great snuff-box. But I like his Aleppo cat, and his rose-leaf conserve is delicious."

Of course this caused a laugh, which was sufficient tribute.

Some would have said — some did say — that the young lady had been inexcusably indiscreet in her conduct with Leone, to put it in the mildest terms, while employing more tolerant censure towards the man. But Leone felt he would have been a fool in the eyes of mankind — yes, and of womankind as well — to have done other than he had done. Why should he repel or rebuke the advances of one so fair who took such interest and pleasure in him?

But for certain unfriendly facts which now occurred, what the immediate outcome of the affair might have been who can tell?

A male relative, one having authority, and eyes of the keenest, — even of the accipiter quality, — being no other than the father of the young lady, appeared upon

the scene. It was soon announced that circumstances obliged a change in Miss Warren's plans. She was to leave Jerusalem the next day. It was something of a shock and a heartbreak; but it was inevitable. Before taking her departure, there was more than one love-passage between the wealthy young heiress and Leone; and, denouncing the interference, she assured him she certainly would return, at no distant day.

"Yes, if from the uttermost parts of the earth, I shall come," was her emphatic language.

While the day-dream lasted, they had been in a maze of pleasure, with the holy places for a background. It was a rude awakening. But this was not all.

While the sad yet sweet regrets of his inamorata were still ringing in Leone's ears, as he stood in the open corridor or *loggia* of the hotel, he was approached by a young man, a native, of uncommon self-possession and engaging address. He saluted Leone with the greatest respect and politeness, calling him by his name, and stating he had been directed to him, at the same time hoping he had made no mistake.

Leone, absorbed in his thoughts, wrapped as in a dream, barely aroused himself sufficiently to answer in a most indifferent perfunctory manner, hardly knowing or caring what he said. He mistook the man for one of the numerous dragomans who had been offering their services to him, and whose importunities had wearied and disgusted him.

In his abstraction he had been watching the swallows, in their imperial purple plumage, as they went circling and flashing, like winged sapphires, in the open space inclosed by the high walls of the houses, above Hezekiah's Pool. The air seemed alive with them, as they came teeming on, on, and on, in endless file, as if they were pouring out of heaven. Around and around they swing, now flitting high, anon swooping low, skimming the water. With what fine impetuosity of abandoned certainty they fling themselves upon the air, making as if they would dash themselves to pieces against the buildings! The wild graceful careering of their course has a method — a rhythmical

order. Thirty or more of them, with passionate precipitation, push out in advance of the main division, then gradually restrain their flight till the rear guard comes up and finally passes in advance, in its turn to be left behind at the next swinging of the circle; while those which were, a moment ago, at the sides, are now in the centre of the winged troop. No wonder we are never tired watching them! No wonder we are cheered by their airy gladness!

"It is marvellously beautiful," Leone thought and said, as he relapsed into his former reverie.

A peculiar movement on the part of the young man beside him recalled his attention.

"What!" exclaimed Leone. "Are you still here? I supposed you had left some time ago."

"Oh no, Signor! I have not left. I am awaiting your pleasure."

"Awaiting my pleasure! Then I fear you will have a long time to wait; for I have no pleasure. How could I have any, in such a miserable, God-forsaken, joyless old city as this is? — Awaiting my pleasure!" repeated Leone. "Why, that is what I am doing. We seem to be both in the same business, and, to all appearance, a hopeless one it is."

A pleased and knowing twinkle flickered in the dark eyes of the young native, in sympathy with a smile of like nature that parted his full red lips. He flattered himself he understood the fine gentleman whom he had approached, and before whom he stood.

"There is much more pleasure here, in spite of appearances, than the Signor thinks. If he would only trust me, I should soon show him," he ventured to reply.

"Really, while I have n't the least doubt of your capabilities in that or any other direction, I do not require your services," returned Leone. "I already have a dragoman, and he is too much for me — one more than I want."

This was evidently a most unexpected reply, for the young native seemed quite taken aback and had nothing to say.

As for Leone, he appeared to imagine he had dismissed the subject and the man, and was quick lapsing back into his original flight of thought, aided by the flight of the swallows, when something in the appearance of the Syrian attracted and recalled his attention.

"You are a good-looking fellow," Leone felt compelled to say, on a closer inspection. "I wish I had seen — "

He was going to say — "I wish I had seen you before engaging my present dragoman," but he checked himself in time.

The Oriental, in cold weather, contracts and shrinks into himself. He drops his gay trappings, and wraps his lithe body in dun-coloured garments. It is only in warm weather that you see him at his best. It is astonishing how the sunshine expands him, — the tropical flower. Not but that in the cold season he generally has a bit of bright or rich colour about him somewhere, like the fulvous streak at the horizon in a grey winter sunset. If his tarboosh, with its scarlet or crimson flush, does not always make him a "red-head," his turban or his sash has a touch of yellow or gold in it. Of course all Turkish soldiers and officers, and officials of every degree and rank, from the Sultan down, wear the fez from morning till night, indoors and outdoors, and are veritable "red-heads," — a name which, while specially appropriate as applied to the Turkish officials, military and civilian, may properly be extended to include the majority of the nation.

But if the ordinary Oriental is a refreshing piece of form and colour, the young Syrian upon whom Leone's eyes rested was a full-blown flower of superlative elegance, rejoicing in the height of its season, and spreading its petals alluringly in the genial sunshine. One might say, in the words of the well-worn phrase, he had been gotten up regardless of expense; and, like the king's daughter of old, he was all-glorious within and without. The raiment of needlework and of wrought gold was not wanting, but was represented in his gold-embroidered jacket. Nor was he deficient in the most airy graces and manners.

The conceit or vanity of the Oriental is something immeasurable and inexpressible, not to say unimaginable, to the Western mind. It is his predominant characteristic. Admiration is the breath of his nostrils; and the wounding of his self-esteem the most atrocious of offences, not to be forgiven. Place him in the least exalted position of honour or trust, and oh, how he will strut, and assume the most intolerable airs of importance! It seems as if every hair on his body put on an extra curl of pride; the toss of the head, the pose of his figure, and every motion of his limbs are studied and practised for their effect on the observant crowd. It is impossible not to notice this. It is thrust upon you, and you are compelled to see it. In the city Syrians it is an unmitigated unmistakable trait. They are forever thinking of their looks, their dress and personal appearance, and the impression they make. When they "dress up," as they love to do, they will be sure to make some excuse to come and show themselves. They avert their eyes with what they consider a "killing" expression, when they think they are observed. There is no exaggerating the amount of flattery they are capable of accepting. You can daub it on with a whitewash brush — you can plaster it on with a shovel. And yet there is a fascination about them that is unaccountable, unless it pertains to the traits described, or is related to a species of sorcery. It recalls what Lord Byron said of the Greeks: "I know you are rascals; yet I can't help loving you."

Of all this there was a living exponent standing at the elbow of the preoccupied Italian count.

Leone's complimentary expression, dropped as an aside, as one throws a crust to a dog, fell on ears that received it with no ordinary gratification. It was like an angelic benediction. The young dragoman beamed all over, from head to foot, in recognition of it, and thought Leone, to whom his heart warmed instanter, one of the most agreeable, handsome and charming men he had ever met. He felt sure that, even had he not known, he could have told he was of noble lineage.

From the first, Leone had paid but indifferent attention to what the Syrian said, having taken for granted that the man was importuning him for employment which he could not give him, and not being able to follow very closely his broken English. Again he turned to watch the swallows, and was fast lapsing into his former train of thought and absent-mindedness, when in the monotonous murmur of the foreign English he caught the mention of his uncle's name.

"What is that you say?" he asked, suddenly seizing the man by the shoulder.

"Excuse me, Signor; I was only saying what I have already told you — that Signor Anselmo Jacobini was most anxious to see you. I have come many times, these many days, seeking to find you, but failed. And now I am informed you have been here all the time. I dare not return to Signor Jacobini without you. He would dismiss me on the spot, should I tell him you were here and I did not bring you to him."

"And who are you? And by what name may I call you?"

"My name is Selim; I am Signor Jacobini's dragoman, at your lordship's disposition."

"Now, Selim, no doubt you are a man to be trusted."

"That 's what I think. If you only try me you will think so too."

"Very good. Listen to me. If Signor Jacobini should deal with you, as you say, for so trifling an offence, what do you suppose he would do to you, did he learn you had failed to convey to me his message, all this time, while I have been here under your very nose?"

"It would be bad for me," acknowledged Selim, dejectedly.

"Suppose we keep silence upon the subject. Under certain circumstances, silence is a great virtue, as I imagine you very well know. Let us say nothing about it."

Selim stepped forward, and, bending low, seized Leone's hand, imprinting a kiss upon it, while he

uttered his acknowledgments and thanks, assuring him he would do anything for him.

"And will you permit me to conduct you to the Signor Jacobini?" Selim inquired. "He has made great preparation for your Excellency. He has spared no expense in furnishing and garnishing your rooms. They are like a palace."

Leone smiled at the description and the high address.

"Yes," he replied; "I will go with you."

The words, which he had begun to fear he should never hear, were a great relief to Selim.

"Thank God!" he said audibly.

He felt as if he were carrying off a great prize which he had richly earned.

As they made their way through the narrow streets to Jacobini's house, Selim, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, said to Leone, "If you ask Signor Jacobini, he will give me to you. He will let you have me for your body-servant."

CHAPTER IX

IT cannot be denied that there was more than a shadow of mistrust in the heart of Leone as, ushered in by the effusive Selim, he stood in the presence of his uncle, Anselmo Jacobini. Doubtless it was a trying moment for uncle as well as for nephew. The retired Hebrew banker had been schooling himself not to expect too much in the way of affectionate feeling or kindly demonstration from his high-toned nephew; while Leone had been nerving himself to conceal and repress any repulsion he might have harboured toward his uncle on account of that long-cherished, bigoted prejudice the young man would not measure or define, because he hated to think of it.

Leone, pausing for a moment in the doorway, saw before him, in the rich but dim setting of the room, an

aged man of dignified presence, who, for aught he knew, so far as appearances went, might have been one of the ancient priests, kings, or prophets of Israel. There was a singular nobility or even grandeur in the manner and bearing of Jacobini, that declared in no false or feeble accents the inner nature of the man.

Selim announced with a flourish, as he had been instructed: "The Count Leone Spollato."

The firm, light step had but half-way crossed the floor when it was met by the still energetic tread of the proud old man, whom Leone had shrunk from meeting.

"You are welcome — welcome indeed."

"Thank you, thank you, Uncle Anselmo. I hope I find you well," was Leone's response, delivered with prepossessing manner and warm pressure of the hand.

The look of qualified hope and subdued expectancy in the face of Jacobini was rapidly melting away into a very different expression. He saw before him the last scion of his house, — the son of his beloved sister. His pride was touched as he beheld the easy carriage, the cultured bearing, the high-bred air of the young patrician, — all evident, but subordinated to a courteous, kind regard that was delightful.

"Nothing could be better. He is perfect."

This was what the uncle thought, while he loved him, on the instant.

A feeling of awe as well as respect tinctured Leone's greeting. His prejudices were almost forgotten. Surely there was nothing mean or degraded here. The man whom he called uncle was of no common clay. He might well have been some great ruler, — a man having authority.

The full satisfaction and joy of Jacobini in finding Leone all that was so admirable in person and manner were of no ordinary type, — to be indulged in without discrimination. They were born of the feelings he had kept in sacred reserve ever since the death of his wife and children.

That grand old face was not without the sculpture that can be carved only by the hand of grief. His

children had died before reaching the ages of men and women, and his wife had not long survived them; while, in spite of all his efforts to save him, his only brother, a young unmarried man of the highest worth and talent, accused unjustly, and cruelly persecuted, had perished in a Russian prison. His sister, the beautiful Rachele, had died, a young mother, as we know, leaving an only child, — the man who now stood before him, — "so engaging, so polished and refined, and full of all that is desirable to the eye," as the bereaved father in Israel told himself.

Thus it had come to pass that Leone was not only the last representative of all the generations of the Spollato family, but the sole heir of the Jacobini blood. In him both the currents met and closed. In him centred the hopes for their perpetuation. This was the obligation that rested upon him. It seemed as if all the generations of the past, on both sides, cried to him, beseechingly, adjuringly, not to let their remembrance perish off the face of the earth, but to leave posterity — heirs born of his own body — to incorporate them in hereditary succession, so that it might be said of them that "they should not want a man to stand before the Lord forever."

This was largely connected with the feeling that had impelled Jacobini to call Leone to him, and undoubtedly added materially to the old man's pleasure in contemplating the unimpeachable manly character of his nephew's personality.

When the first words of welcome and joy were over, Jacobini held Leone opposite to him, while his eyes searched every feature of the young man's face with a gaze that was almost fondling. He was seeking some family likeness, some hint of the past, in the handsome lineaments.

"You are the son of my beloved sister — my Rachele," he said. "You are as dear to me as if you were my own offspring. What would I not do for you?"

"My uncle — my father, you are very good to me. I am not worthy of your kindness," stammered Leone.

He remembered his bitter prejudice, and the intensity of his aversion to the *mala sangre* of the house of Judah displayed on the occasion of that memorable interview with his uncle Giovanni, in their ancestral home in Naples. How he hated himself — his own blood — because of the contaminating stain! He recalled the horror he felt, so lately, lest Miss Warren and others should learn of his connection with Anselmo Jacobini. Many another past incident arose to rebuke and accuse him. No wonder his conscience smote him. No wonder that he felt ashamed. He was here in spite of himself. He was led captive. This was the end. The old man's generosity and love had conquered him.

Each day the net that held him was more closely and more inextricably wound about him. He himself could not explain it. His uncle would not suffer him to be contradicted or thwarted. Leone's most extravagant wishes were anticipated. Money was lavished upon him. Everything possible was done to make him contented, and reconciled to the life, — a life so different from that he had been accustomed to in Naples, that he had wondered he could endure it. At length his uncle obtained from him the promise that he would remain with him in Jerusalem.

The delight Jacobini took in the young man was extraordinary. It was evident he not only loved him, but was proud of him. He was not happy when he was out of his presence. He insisted upon Leone's being addressed by his title and honoured beyond himself, in which he set the example.

Gradually he began interesting Leone in matters pertaining to the Jacobini family and its history. There was an old coffer, resembling a muniment chest, which played an important part on such occasions. It was made of some unknown dark wood, curiously and elaborately carved, and was provided with iron bands and hasps. The contents consisted chiefly of parchments and scrolls, some of which were evidently of great antiquity. A few were made of antelope skins, inclosed in silver cases. They were in various stages of discolouration and decay. Many of them — odd

scraps of leather — were crumbling to pieces, and indecipherable, others were partly so; and only a few of the more modern documents could be read with satisfaction. Jacobini informed his nephew that they were pedigrees, legal documents, and family histories and notes covering a long period of time. The oldest documents, he declared, were in the ancient character of the Israelites, which they had lost when carried into captivity — the same in which God had written the first tables of stone. He declared there was undoubted proof that the office of Treasurer to the royal house of David, from which he claimed descent, had been hereditary in his family, through all the varied history of its kings; and certain relics which he showed Leone were, to some extent, corroborative of the pretension.

Jacobini never argued about any of these points, as Leone soon learned; but expected them to be received implicitly, as he had received them. To him they were indisputable, accepted facts. Many of the traditions and statements were only verbal, handed down from father to son; but they were accorded by Jacobini a reverence beyond that he gave to the parchments.

For some time he had been quietly making in Jerusalem investigations in connection with his family and the documents. He had satisfied himself regarding the identification of certain localities on Mount Zion, and had gone so far as, through the use of bribery or backsheesh, to carry on some secret excavation there. The results, he considered, were most encouraging; and he only regretted that his age prevented his giving more of his personal supervision to the work.

"I am too old to do much more," he said. "But you, Leone, — you — "

It was not altogether congenial work for Leone; but what could he say or do?

"Yes, uncle, yes," he answered, manfully acquiescing.

"I would not have you expose yourself to the least danger," he said, apologetically. "But without doing that, there will be opportunity to direct and watch the work. And I, for my part, shall only be too glad to do what I can."

The principal place of their research was in a part of an old and little-used garden, which Jacobini believed to be the garden of King Herod, and within which must have stood the royal palace. The point where they had discovered certain marks and indications identifying the locality with the descriptions in the ancient parchments and rolls, was in and below the foundations of the westerly wall of the city, which proved to be of the most ancient work. The rock beneath gave abundant evidence of the unmistakable old chisel-marks, and further down, was honeycombed with chambers.

Though the custodian of the garden and others had been "arranged with," — to employ no more offensive term, — it was considered necessary to use great secrecy, and the work at the surface was carried on at night, with the aid of the dark lantern.

Among the more interesting discoveries was an article carved from the black Dead Sea stone, which Jacobini, after a close examination, pronounced to be the signet of King David. Slightly in excess of four inches in height, it was rudely shaped in the form of a man, showing more than three-quarters in length of the figure, and terminating below in a series of spirals; but instead of arms were what resembled folded wings, pressed closely, one on each side. This image was simply the handle. Upon the smooth oval base of the image was the seal. This held the inscription in ancient Hebrew: "The servant of Jehovah, David the King." It contained, therefore, the "Ineffable Name." The characters, with the exception of a few variants, were almost identical with those of the oldest of the parchments of the iron-bound coffer, and for which Jacobini claimed such extraordinary antiquity. It was the Hebrew before the Babylonian Captivity.



"I now understand the references to the seal or signet in some of the documents," said Jacobini. "It is evident the royal Treasurer was also Keeper of the Seal. To him was the care of it intrusted; and the

affixing it to decrees and other important papers, by direction of the king, was his prerogative."

"But how is it possible that the seal should have been made in the form of a man?" inquired Leone, doubtingly. "Would it not be an infringement of the commandment against graven images?"

This was a poser to Jacobini.

The question was submitted to some learned Jews: The difficulty, it seemed, was not insurmountable. The force of the prohibition, it was explained, resided in "the making to thyself," that is, in setting up for worship any graven image, and though afterwards given a more sweeping extension, so as to exclude all carved images for any purpose whatsoever, certain uses, such as the one in question, would not conflict with the divine command. Moreover, in any case, the opinion declared, the omission of a single part of the thing represented would satisfy the requirements, removing all objection. Thus it was pointed out the figure forming the handle of the seal was not full length, being without the lower extremities; besides, the arms were wanting. Therefore it did not offend against the law. The cherubim on the Mercy Seat were cited in corroboration.

So the question was settled, to Jacobini's satisfaction.

"It is a clear case" — was Leone's sarcastic comment, completing the sentence *sotto voce* — "of Hebraic evasion."

Nothing aroused Jacobini's disgust as did any allusion to the fact that Moslem descendants of King Solomon, living upon the Mount, held a firman from the Sultan confirming their right and title, through that descent, to the land and buildings on Mount Zion connected with the tomb of David and the kings of Judah. He would not listen to it with the least patience; and once when, on the Mount, and near the ancient sepulchre, certain of those descendants were pointed out to him, he would not look at them, but turned away his face; though nothing is more clearly established than that both David and Solomon were much-married men.

Yet, with all his pride in this direction, he admitted in private to Leone that he attributed some of the evils that had befallen him to his descent from King David.

"The house of David, with few exceptions, was, like that of the Stuarts of Scotland, a faithless and unfortunate house," he said. "It began with an atrocious and bloody crime, for which, when convicted of it, the author offered but scanty and fruitless repentance. What could be expected as the outcome but a licentious, pleasure-worshipping Solomon, who, wise as he was, lapsed into idolatrous infidelity, leaving a son to succeed him, who proved to be a weak-brained, overbearing despot, and lost the ten tribes through his folly? And so on — with, here and there, a gleam of hope, generally to be disappointed — to the end of the pedigree. There seems to be a fatality about the dynasty, and everything connected with it."

Leone would smile to himself complacently at these admissions, while he confessed he quite agreed with his uncle's opinion on the subject.

Though he sometimes declared it was next to martyrdom, on the whole, Leone bore his transplanting to Jerusalem much better than could have been expected. Having but few recreations, he amused himself with collecting and studying the ancient coins and other antiquities of the country, and soon had a respectable museum. In this and in less praiseworthy pleasures he was aided by Selim, who from the first had closely attached himself to him, insinuating himself into his good graces, bound to make himself indispensable to him. Through him Leone was also acquiring a certain knowledge of the Arabic, which he flattered himself would soon be sufficient for conversational purposes.

Seeing the important *rôle* filled by Selim in easing and making more bearable Leone's banishment in the ancient city, Jacobini congratulated himself that he had not given way to the persuasions of the rabbis, but had retained the Moslem.

"I felt sure Leone would like him better than the man they recommended," he said. "The two young men together — it is but natural."

Yet he loved to ridicule Selim's weak traits; and seldom lost an opportunity of pointing them out to Leone.

"Look at that Oriental — that Syrian," he would say. "What an air and carriage he has! The jerky swing of the silk tassel of that crimson tarboosh of his measures for you his conceit. See its haughty whisk at each step he takes, as though it had a conscious life, in sympathy with its owner."

Leone laughed.

"Nothing reaches the conceit of those fellows," he said, "not even the proverbial jackass. To me it is a great source of amusement. But as to Selim, he is so devoted to me he makes me like him."

"Did you notice what a handsome dog he is?"

"Ah! did I not?"

"He is full of the devil," added Jacobini, laughing. "He is equal to anything. But I am glad you like him."

Jacobini had a humorous side to which he but rarely gave way until finding it amused Leone, when he oftener indulged in it. In this mood he did not hesitate to slash into Jewish history and effete customs, for his nephew's benefit; though no man was more reverent of the truly sacred things than was Jacobini.

"Let me tell you my Egyptian experience, Leone, and you will see how conscientious I am," was his preface to the following: "When I came through Egypt, and remembered how my people had defrauded the Egyptians at the Exodus, borrowing from them jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, which they never intended to return, so that 'they spoiled the Egyptians' — I felt I could afford to be generous in the distribution of an extra large backsheesh there. It was a sort of retribution or liquidation on my part, so far as I was concerned in that ancient fraudulent transaction. Did you ever know a man go farther back to discharge a debt?"

CHAPTER X

LEONE had been faithful in carrying out, so far as he conveniently could, his uncle's wishes in regard to the researches which Jacobini was so much interested in. But he could not very well conceal the fact that it was irksome business to him. So enthusiastic was his uncle, that three or four times he had exerted himself to accompany Leone to the place, taking due precautions to prevent discovery.

In going, they had to pass the den-like shops sunk in the wall of the garden of the Armenian convent. In those dark recesses the makers of filigree carried on the manufacture of their delicate work; and near by were the tattooers, who seemed to have quite as large a patronage. Above, over the high wall of the garden, stretched far across the roadway the plumy branches of a row of fine old pines, whispering and sighing with that gentle susurration that is an embodied memory — the likest sound in Nature to the far-off murmuring of the sea. Beyond an angle, in a recess, was a solid gate, entering by which, they found themselves in a long passage which brought them to another gate that opened into the garden.

Being provided with keys, they had no difficulty in gaining access to the grounds. The trouble lay in the danger of being detected. That they should be able to carry on such work without discovery seems incredible. Nor could it be done for any great length of time. It was only the connivance of the gardener made it at all possible.

To Jacobini it was enchanted land. As he walked under the trees he thought of David, Solomon and Hezekiah, the cruel Herod and the beautiful Mariamne, as having trod the same ground. The Christian believer would also have remembered that it was here, and to the palace of the High Priest, not far from here, that Christ was dragged from the Judgment

Hall of Pilate on that night of agony and terror preceding the Crucifixion.

The hope of making some more important discovery stimulated Jacobini; and he would have risked much with such a prize in view.

But suddenly he was warned that he must desist.

"It is heart-breaking," he said; "just as we are on the eve, perhaps, of some great revelation. But we have sufficiently determined the main point. I am convinced of the correspondence of the various descriptions in the parchments, and the identity of the place."

He was not satisfied till he had liberally remunerated every one connected with the transaction. But the work was closed.

The exertions he had made and the disappointment told on his health. He was laid up for several days, and his physician advised him he must be more careful in future, and not expose himself unnecessarily. Though he recovered, it was but slowly, and his nervous system seemed impaired. In truth, old age was leaving its final marks upon him, and he felt this and acknowledged it.

"I am like the old trees in the forest that the woodman marks to be cut down," he said. "If I live much longer, I shall be cumbering the ground."

It was while his uncle was confined to his room and to bed that Leone discovered, to some extent, the benevolences in which the sick man took so much pleasure. The pensioners who depended on his bounty were of all sorts and degrees of misery and wretchedness. The blind, so numerous in Jerusalem, where ophthalmia rages only less fiercely than in Egypt, were special objects of his care.

"There can be no mistake in such a case," he would say. "The poor blind man needs no voice to beg for alms or pity; his sightless orbs speak louder than words. His silence is the greatest eloquence."

There were many poor Jews to whom he gave privately, to save their pride. Whatever a Jew may be elsewhere, however despised, hated, degraded, impover-

ished, in Jerusalem he is a king, at least in his own eyes.

Nor did he restrict his benevolence to any narrowing lines of race or religion. The Turk and Moslem frequently had reason to praise and bless his generosity.

Once, when speaking of their politeness and courtesy, a friend had interrupted him, remarking, —

"I wonder at your sympathy for the Moslem and the Turk, — the lithe, brawny Turk, with his stealthy tread and sensual soul; in the form of a man, indeed, but with a beast inside of him."

"After all, with such a government and with his institutions, the Turk is not so much to blame," Jacobini replied. "Poor fellow, is he not rather to be commiserated?"

Then, always ready to speak good and not evil of a man, where possible, he referred to the constant acknowledgment of God by the Moslems, and the mark invariably used by them — (4) half-way between a cross and the figure 4 — at the commencement of letters and all writings, even official documents, standing for: "In the name of God the Most Merciful," — the words beginning every chapter of the Koran. "It speaks well for them," he said. "They are not ashamed of their religion. And their rigid exclusion of all semblance of idolatry from their worship is beyond praise."

The large minds, and those that God loves, are not those that stop to question and to quarrel about little differences of religion, but those who agree in believing the great things, and set themselves to reach them and do them.

Among the *protégés* he took the most interest and pleasure in were those he was encouraging to maintain industrious habits and carry on some trade or business, thus preserving their self-respect. There was the fine old Spanish Jew, an aristocrat in his way, who would not think of taking alms. He was essentially an artist, a virtuoso, who supported himself by his skilful repairing and renovating of Oriental carpets and rugs, masterpieces mellow with age. He was accomplished in his knowledge of the more unique specimens of

these, any of which, with few exceptions, he declared he could make. Besides, he gathered and sold other antiques. He was a picturesque object with his many-coloured wools and threads, visiting houses to restore the rare old mats and carpets, lending himself to the work as if it was a labour of love. Leone also became a patron of this interesting Jew, whose dignified character he could not but respect; and he told his uncle Anselmo that he had come to the conclusion that the Spanish, Portuguese and Italian Jews were among the more noble types.

Others he was also interested in were the peasants and villagers who earn a scanty and precarious living by the peculiar industry of the grinding and powdering of ancient pottery which they dig out of the long-accumulated rubbish of the city, and who carry on their strange manufacture chiefly on the rocky ledges at the lower end of the Gihon. This long-seasoned old pottery, when finely ground to powder, is used for cement in relining cisterns, and for other purposes. As these men and women often dig out rare old Jewish, Roman, and other coins, ancient iridescent glass, and innumerable miscellaneous antiques, they naturally become antiquarians of a humble sort. They found it profitable to resort to Leone and his uncle with their "finds," and always were welcomed.

No doubt occasionally Jacobini gave indiscreetly. When this was brought to his notice, he would confess with contrition his fault.

"There is no question it is a species of robbery on my part as well as on his who deceived me, by which the worthy poor have been deprived of that which should have gone to them, but which has been diverted into a base channel," was his censure of the act. "A man must not let the feeling of kindness go in advance of duty and responsibility."

He had always attended to those cases personally. It was a matter which he disliked delegating to another. And on the appointed days the courtyard in rear of his house would often be crowded with the objects of his charity.

"I am a rival of the Greek and Latin convents," he said, referring to the enormous distribution of bread at those religious houses, too often with proselytising intent; a few more loaves given by either convent causing an entire family to "flop over" into the church giving the greater number.

Since Jacobini's illness Leone was obliged to take upon himself the eleemosynary functions of his uncle, who he feared would never again be able to resume them. To him it was far from an agreeable duty. Many of the Jewish recipients of the generous bounty almost demanded it as a right. He could never forget one of them saying to him in an angry tone, "He owes me now for three weeks."

Jacobini's recovery, it was evident, did not bring back his complete strength; and his physician required that the greatest care and caution should be observed by him, even after his convalescence. Latterly he had fallen into a gloomy reminiscent mood, and often talked of the past with Leone, when he had him alone.

"As we advance in years," he said, "we have so many dead belonging to us, that life and memory assume for us more or less of the graveyard aspect. Do what we will, the fact remains. We try to forget it; or we cover the graves with flowers of sentiment and affection, or the fragrance of old joys; and we tell ourselves we have higher hopes; but we feel, all the time, — though we ought not to feel so, — that the dreadful darkness is there that no light can dissipate, — where no light ever comes, or has come."

He had been speaking of the deaths of his two sons and his wife, having previously given the account of the death of his sister Rachele, and the cruel end of his only brother. He spoke of the home in Venice, and the overshadowing of it.

"There I suffered a great sorrow," he said. "It almost fitted me for the 'kingdom of heaven'; purging away the dross, and lifting me up — up, till at times I seemed to breathe celestial air. I prayed for the souls of my two boys, — my sons, whom I had expected

to pray for my soul, — who were to be the custodians of the sacred trust of our family — and I tried to be resigned. God help me, I had to be resigned! But there was a great desolateness, first. Oh, the dreariness, the blackness of despair, the nothingness of everything! The remembrance of it haunts me yet. It is a time like that which makes or mars a man — but oftenest mars him. I thanked God for the deliverance."

It seemed to Leone that this state of mind portended the change that comes but once to all; and that his uncle, in thus brooding, was conscious and expectant of it. But the physician was positive that the worst was over, and that with proper care Jacobini might live for several years.

To encourage him, Leone told him the doctor's opinion. But the aged man shook his head sadly.

"At my time of life," he said, "who knows what a day may bring forth? Though I have recovered from this attack, it is a warning to me to put my house in order against the time when I shall go hence and be no more. Well may I say, in the words of Job: 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?' But think not I repine at this."

"Yet you are much better," said Leone, who hardly knew what to say in reply.

"Yes, I am better to-day; but what may I be to-morrow?"

Jacobini was seated in his favourite place, the copy of the great Pentateuch open before him on his reading desk. The day was remarkably fine and sunny, and he enjoyed it, the casement being unclosed wide to the breeze. His face showed the marks of his recent illness. There was a touch of physical weakness, though the lines were more refined and spiritual. But his mind was bright and clear.

"It was never more so, in all my life," he declared. "It has been refreshed and made strong by glad tidings."

He had just received the news, from the American

consul, of the abrogation of the Sultan's firman or decree regarding the expulsion of the Jews.

"Praise be to God, the consul has succeeded in this great deliverance of my people! His representations and despatches have had the effect. Of all the consuls in Jerusalem, he was the only one who refused to aid, and even resisted, the Turkish government in this work, as the Pasha of Palestine had repeatedly told him, remonstrating with him. He was alone; but he remained firm. See the result. Four hundred Hebrews have just landed at Jaffa, without the least molestation or hindrance; and there will be no more expulsion! It is enough to put new life in me. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'"

He spoke of the recent coming to Jerusalem of the Jews from Yemen, in Arabia, who claimed to be of the tribe of Gad. These Gadite Jews said they had been warned by writings affixed to the door of their synagogue, which told them that the time had come when they should return to Jerusalem.

"It is all the fulfilment of prophecy," he said. "The city itself is growing on the very lines foretold by the prophets Jeremiah and Zachariah. The water too shall be brought into Jerusalem in abundance, 'a fountain for sin and for uncleanness.' We have no longer need of faith, when we see these things, — when we see prophecy fulfilling itself under our very eyes. 'Great is our Lord, and worthy to be praised!' Have I not magnified his holy name?"

A wonderful change passed upon the face and form of Jacobini as he spoke. It was as if he was transfigured, — overshadowed by some holy being. He put his arm around Leone, and drew him to him. He took his hand and pressed it to his breast.

"I have held back too long," he said, "held back, for doubt — unbelief — and want of faith. But it shall be so no longer. Are you not my son almost as much as though you were born of me? Are you not the grandson of my father, — the child of my sister, my beloved Rachele?"

"My uncle! Uncle Anselmo, you are tiring yourself!" exclaimed Leone.

He could not understand. He thought his uncle's mind was wandering, — overcome by his joy at the good news.

"Nay. Listen to me," replied his uncle. "Were we not hereditary treasurers and scribes of the Kings of Judah, beginning with King David, and Keepers of the Great Seal of the King? But besides this, and above all, — even to the present hour, — we have been the custodians of the 'Ineffable Name,' preserved hitherto carefully in the family, and spoken by the head of the house, in secret, to the eldest son, on his coming of age, that it might be kept holy, and not be lost. Vocally it has disappeared from the world. Its pronunciation, — its very sound, — its exact form, have melted from the memory of mankind in general. The greatest scholars are in doubt and dispute about it. I have shown you the name upon the seal — the four pointless letters that express it, or rather stand for it — in reality but three, for the second and fourth characters are alike. The vowels, or points indicating the vowels being wanting, the written word is utterly unpronounceable. It is the archaic Hebrew — lost in Chaldea, and for which the Chaldaic alphabet has been substituted."

By this time Leone was all attention, — so absorbed he would not speak, lest he should lose a word of what his uncle said.

"The Name above every Name, — the sacredness of it, how shall I express it?" continued Jacobini. "At one time it was never written, or only partially written, and then with a separate stylus, or one cleansed for the purpose. It was spoken but once a year, by the High Priest, when he went into the Holy of Holies, — where none but he might enter; chains being fastened about his feet, that he might be drawn out in case of his death, swooning, illness, or other accident. On coming out, after sprinkling the blood of atonement on the altar, in the holy place, he spoke the 'Ineffable Name' in the ears of all the people, they prostrating themselves."

All this Jacobini related to Leone; but with a cer-

tain measure of reluctance and fear, — Leone not being an Israelite indeed, and not bearing upon his person the immemorial mark of the covenant.

Had it been possible to have brought it about, there is no doubt it would have relieved the good and pious Anselmo to have had Leone receive the ancient rite. But, from the first, his uncle had little or no hope of inducing him to submit to it; and the efforts of the rabbis utterly failed with the young man. He would not listen to them on the subject, and horrified and scandalised them by denouncing and ridiculing it in the grossest terms.

"I have delayed, I have doubted, I have argued with myself about it," said Jacobini. "But now I will no longer hesitate. The time has come. I feel it as if an angel told me. On this day of days, — in this very hour, — this very moment, I am determined that to you, Leone, the last of our blood, the rightful heir to the inheritance, honours and dignities of our house, in whom its hopes are fixed for its perpetuation, — to you I am resolved to communicate the 'Ineffable Name,' as it was conveyed to me; and God grant it is a righteous act, and that you will keep the trust faithfully, and transmit it in like manner to your son."

It was a breathless moment. The old man arose. A look of awful majesty filled his expressive countenance, that was lighted with an unearthly radiance. He drew himself up, so that in Leone's sight he appeared to grow taller, — much taller than usual. But he remained silent, — uttering not a single syllable, till the unbroken stillness of the room became oppressive, — almost unbearable.

He had seemed more than once to make an effort to speak. The lips moved, but not a sound came from them. Leone was completely awed at the sight.

At last the aged man slowly raised his arms aloft, — high above his head, holding them there for several moments. Then, lowering them, he folded them for a few seconds on his breast, at the place where the great jewelled breastplate with the Urim and Thummim, that dread and mystic oracle of Israel's worship, was

worn by the High Priest; but finally, with a motion of grievous pity, extended them, one on each side, to their full length, in that significant posture symbolising the sacred Tau — the ansated cross, which was archaic and venerable in the days when Moses wandered by the Nile, the boy-*protégé* of Pharaoh's daughter, learning all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

Leone bowed himself in the attitude of worship. In that instant the Word seemed to speak itself, in living accents. The long-disused syllables took distinct form. And upon the wondering air rested, like a benediction, the Name of the Most High God.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN the night came down and darkness covered the land, Hassan was still abiding in the fields, watching his flock.

The stars came out, one by one. They hung like rare jewels — diamonds, emeralds, sapphires and rubies of the first water — in that clear cloudless sky. He could tell them all by their names; for, many a night had he lain thus, gazing into the face of the heavens, till it had become to him as the face of a friend.

"They are my familiars," he said. "They speak to me, and I know their voices."

The air was filled with odours unknown to the day. The night-smelling stock poured out its delicious, copious, mystical fragrance, which the sun, all day long, had been unable to awaken, and with the breath of mint and thyme and rue and many another herb saturated the soft westerly gale that swept up from the great sea — the not so very far off blue Mediterranean. It was as if the feet of the genii and other spirits trod out the perfume, or as if the unseen angel host swung censers overflowing with pungent burning incense.

"What a beautiful fragrant carpet of God the wild uncontaminated places of the earth are! It is all a

prayer-carpet — a seggâdeh," said the young shepherd.

Lonely as the place was during the day, it was far more lonely in the still night-watches. The mysterious silences seemed to Hassan to have a presence — an individuality, and to be one with the almost palpable and impenetrable darkness that enveloped everything as with a garment; and to be allied with the intensified odours that swept along the ground in spicy whiffs. They suggested the afrit, peri and demon. He drew his abai of camel's hair, woven in those broad brown and white stripes, so peculiarly characteristic, more closely about him, as much from his sense of isolation and awe, as to guard against the chilliness of the atmosphere, while he settled nearer to the overhanging rock, whose shelter he had selected as his place of bivouac. Well might he say in the words of Jacob of old: "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes."

An unaccountable feeling of anxiety as well as the cold had made him wakeful; and he had slept but little.

"The genii and their chief, Iblees, are surely abroad to-night," he soliloquized.

He had brought his sheep to this spot for more than one reason. The pasturage, though of limited extent, was some of the best in the neighborhood, and was protected from the colder winds by a long, though irregular and partially broken natural wall of cliff. Moreover, water, that great desideratum, was accessible, if not abundant.

But these inducements were doubtless of far less weight with him at present than the fact that Hilwe would be there on the morrow, as she had informed him. Spite of custom — that unwritten tyrannical law — she had promised to meet him there. The adjacent hillside was thickly covered with the brushwood which the peasants of Palestine are so largely dependent on for their fuel. As is well known, with the peculiar habits of the people, its provision is nearly altogether left to the women of the family, who cut, dry, haul and store it for household purposes. It is chiefly employed for heating the great

ovens, built of stone, which are such conspicuous objects in all the villages of the country, and which are largely used in common by the inhabitants of each place. He was aware, from personal knowledge, that an extra or unusual quantity of the brushwood had been cut and dried on that particular hillside, in which the people of Malha claimed a proprietary interest, and that the important product now only required collecting together in piles or bale-like bundles, and finally conveying to the village on the backs of donkeys, or, as was too often the case, on the backs of the women themselves.

When donkeys were employed, the men sometimes condescended to assist in the work of driving them. Otherwise all of this drudgery generally fell to the lot of the women.

Hilwe would probably be accompanied by three or four of the elder women of Malha, under whose espionage she would, more or less, be placed. But this was an impediment both the young people had taken into consideration, and with which there was more than one way of satisfactorily dealing.

Hassan had secretly gathered and bound Hilwe's share of the brush.

"I have made it easy for her," he said smiling.

The women occupied with their work, would get separated, Hassan argued. Where they had no special or personal interest in the young woman under their charge, such as the bond of relationship implied, and as was the case in this instance, their responsibility, usually self-imposed, was of the lightest and frailest character, and their duty as guardians was performed in the most perfunctory manner, if at all. Hilwe could, without difficulty, wander off, out of eyesight and earshot of those obnoxious creatures; and so he could have her all to himself, and enjoy with her the secret meeting for which his whole soul thirsted and longed.

The very suggestion set him beside himself, and made the weary hours of the night seem longer.

"Yes," he said, "it can easily be done. Why not?" And, with the ardent imagination of the Oriental, he was not slow in filling up the details.

He had discovered a cave in the cliff near his pasturage, a place little resorted to, and difficult to find, and where the women from Malha would be most unlikely to penetrate, as it was distinctly on the Bettîr side of the boundary. He for some time had used this cave as a shelter and partial dwelling-place. There Hilwe and he could safely meet and discuss the present shape of things, and make their plans for the future.

Under the distressing circumstances in which they were placed, it was necessary that they should meet and comfort each other. They could not live, otherwise. It was all-important too that Hassan should be kept informed of the progress of the suit of Abd-el-nour, and of any new and dangerous phases it should assume.

These were the things that Hassan and Hilwe told themselves in exculpation of the facts, and in presence of their superabundant love for each other.

"Thou wilt not fail to come, Hilwe?" Hassan asked, for the pleasure of hearing her answer.

"Ah, surely I shall be there, with Allah's help!" was her ringing reply.

When a young man and young woman are determined on meeting, what power on earth can prevent their coming together? The very spirits of the air seem to become their allies, and the occult principles and laws of nature appear to be on their side, to fight for them. How often have they been known to carry on their procedures under the very eyes and noses of their elders, without causing the least suspicion of what they were at, and though those sagacious guardians had, of course, the full benefit of their own experiences to warn them of the inevitable result. It seems to be a natural fatality, or, more properly, a result of the conditions.

In the darkness of the long-drawn night hours, in his sheltered nook, on the edge of the beautiful stretch of pasture, his solid shoulders pressing against the side of the overhanging rock, Hassan saw in anticipation the whole scene of the blissful meeting which he hoped to realise on the morrow. It sent the blood in warmer, swifter, and more blissful currents through his veins, and

made him long, more than ever, that the night were over.

As he noted the time by the stars, he thought they had never moved so slowly. Yet the glinting Fishes, true to Palestine, shone bright. There was Orion, up on high, a strong young man, like himself; belted, and armed, and valiant, a very giant, he stood up boldly and defiantly in the firmament, in his complete virile equipment, a resolute victor forever. It did him good to see him; and he praised God like a faithful Moslem, and took courage. Near by were the Pleiades glittering like a netted purse of gold; and not far off the Hyades, looking like the Arabic numeral Sabaa — seven — (V).

"They all mean good fortune," he said.

True, the red Antares in the baneful Scorpion seemed to watch him ominously like a fiery evil eye.

"Perhaps it means Abd-el-nour," he whispered.

But he did not care. He could outmatch him, and get the better of him, he was confident. Yes, he would thwart his base designs, and deliver Hilwe from him; he would be a victor, as was Orion, the immortal hunter.

Like most Mohammedans, Hassan had his tasbih or chaplet of beads with him, and, notwithstanding the wandering thoughts, slipped the tiny balls, made of wood from Mecca — most holy Mecca — with great regularity, muttering as each one passed through his fingers, the name of God — "Allah."

This act very soon becomes with the worshipper merely formal and automatic. But in the East almost every one, excepting the Jew and women, carries a chaplet or rosary, and whether in the street or the house, men may be seen having these articles of devotion in their hands, and sliding the beads with constant motion through their fingers, which they continue to do in the midst of their conversation and business transactions. Even natives belonging to the Protestant churches persist in the habit. They say they do it for amusement, to occupy their hands and to pass the time. No doubt it contributes to the ease of manner for which the Oriental is so celebrated. The rosary was unknown in

Europe till introduced by the Crusaders returning from the Holy Land.

Hassan also commenced repeating portions of the Koran, which he found exceedingly comforting in the darkness, and helpful in making the hours pass less tardily.

Especially did he love to dwell on those parts which describe the bliss of Paradise, and the exquisite delights of the true believers, in the future life. How his tongue and his thoughts lingered and luxuriated over those highly coloured and voluptuous portrayals of the happiness in store for the faithful followers of the Prophet, and which pictured them as "reposing on couches adorned with gold and precious stones; sitting opposite to one another thereon," so as to enjoy in companionship their pleasures; while "youths who shall continue in their bloom forever shall go round about to attend them, with goblets and beakers, and a cup of flowing wine — denied them on earth, but now permitted — and with fruits of the sorts which they shall choose, and the flesh of birds of the kind which they shall desire. And there shall accompany them fair damsels having large black eyes, resembling pearls hidden in their shells; as a reward for that which they shall have wrought." These resplendent houris of paradise are not created of clay as mortal women are, but are made of pure musk. Each sense shall have its proper gratification, none shall be unsatisfied. The ear will be entertained with the ravishing songs of the angel Israfil, who has, of all God's creatures, the sweetest voice. And to qualify the blessed for the full enjoyment of the pleasures of this garden of delights, "God will give to every one the abilities of a hundred men."

This is the Moslem's dream of Heaven, the Paradise revealed in his holy book, the hope of reaching which he has ever before him amid the trials and vicissitudes of this life.

It was natural that Hassan, in contemplating the ecstatic vision as related by the Arabian Prophet should mingle with the picture of the chief actors in this alluring scene — those beauteous large-eyed virgins of Para-

dise — the image of his beloved, Hilwe. To him, each of the seventy-two damsels apportioned to him as his own individual share in the heavenly place, bore the exact image and likeness of the woman he loved — the little maiden of Malha.

"Ah, my Hilwe," he exclaimed, "I shall long for thee even in Paradise, and therefore shall have thee there."

The only possibility of a woman entering Heaven, it is firmly believed by the Moslems, rests upon her having a husband there who wishes for her.

With the more sensual conception of the Koran mingled that revelation of the new Heaven of St. John the Evangelist which Hassan had learned from the missionaries, and which is described as the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from on high, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Here he was told of gates of pearl, foundations of precious stones, streets of gold, and the river of life, on the sides of which were planted that wondrous tree bearing twelve manner of fruits, and whose leaves were for the healing of the nations. There was no night there. He remembered that very distinctly — all the more so that he was now experiencing the effects of exposure to a very dark and cold night on that breezy hillside of Palestine.

In the midst of these beatific images of Paradise and its delights, with which, as has been said, invariably mingled the face and form of his adored Hilwe, Hassan was suddenly and rudely aroused to the fact that some wild beast had attacked his flock.

During the latter part of the night he had been disturbed by the howling and sharp barking of the jackals which infested those cliffs and hillsides in great numbers, and which even are bold enough to show themselves during the daytime. The most annoying whining cry of a hyena had also more than once sounded unpleasantly near. This last animal, with its great fangs, and of cruel and treacherous nature as well as hideous aspect, reaches a large size, and sometimes proves a disagreeable visitor to the shepherd and his flock.

Hassan had therefore to keep on the alert, and had been unable to obtain more than a few brief snatches of sleep throughout the entire time, though it was by this near to daybreak.

The peculiar howl and deep growling which now broke on his startled ear was different from anything of the kind with which he was acquainted. It was accompanied by a frightened scampering and bleating of the sheep.

He immediately sprang to his feet, and, seizing his heavily-knobbed club, such as shepherds in Palestine are invariably provided with when tending their flocks, he quickly ran down towards the partly artificial, partly natural inclosure into which, as the night had come on, he had driven his flock for security.

The rear of the rude inclosure, if such it may be called, was formed of the high cliff, and so afforded ample protection in that quarter. A low spur covered with broken rock that ran out from the cliff at an obtuse angle formed one of the sides; the opposite side consisted of great fragments of stone which, loosening and breaking away from the ledge, had fallen and partly rolled down the slope, lying piled with more or less irregularity for some distance from its base. The fourth and last side, which had in it the entrance, and was parallel to the cliff, was almost totally of artificial construction, being made chiefly of the scattered boulders collected from the adjacent surface of the ground, and built up into the most primitive form of a mortarless wall or fence.

Though the second and third mentioned sides had received from the hand of man some little assistance in bringing them into their shape, they had long since lost most of the evidence of such a fact, and seemed to have lapsed back into a state of nature. They were to a great extent covered with a growth of weeds, brush, and shrubs, and on the spur-like ridge two or three fig-trees had taken root, springing from the chance seeds deposited probably by a bird, or unheedingly dropped by some shepherd or wayfarer of a generation ago, who had stopped there to rest while he ate his simple meal of bread and figs.

This gentle merging into what they originally came out of — this sinking back into nature, of dwelling, wall, terrace, bastion, palace and temple — is a sight which one grows familiar with in this ancient land; and the matter is often so nicely balanced that it is a puzzle to determine with certainty that the particular object before one, covered with clinging vines and plants, and overshadowed with shrubbery, is of artificial structure, or that, from the beginning to the present time it was Nature's work, and Nature's alone.

In no other country in the world are even the dwellings of the present day in such absolute harmony with their surroundings. They are completely akin to the rocky "high-places," the craggy cliffs and scaurs which they front or crown, and which they seem to have grown out of, through some natural process, rather than to have been built by man.

The fact that the village house is, in many cases, simply a single room, or, at best, an extension or series of rooms, in one story or more, erected in front of a great cave, the abiding place of the prehistoric people of the land, the troglodytes of Palestine — in not a few instances the direct ancestors of the present occupants — is another consonance of significant import, and an interesting link in the mighty chain of the life-record of the aborigines of the country and the history of the human race. The hole or cave in the rock has simply developed or expanded into the stone house — in reality a sort of cliff-dwelling, bearing in colour and structure the very appearance of being a continuation of the rock itself, of which, and upon which it has been built.

Hassan had proceeded but a short distance towards the inclosure, when the peculiar sounds he heard had the effect of making him suddenly retrace his steps. This was for the purpose of procuring his rifle, he having left it in a hollow of the rock beneath which he had bivouacked. The implement was rather an antiquated-looking piece, bound with many brass bands, and otherwise repaired, and with the general appearance that it might be of dangerous consequences to him who

employed it. Yet, like many another of the same kind found in Bedawin tents and elsewhere in this country, in the hands of a native skilled in its use it was an effective weapon. It was a flintlock, and was already loaded and primed.

There was more than one entrance to the fold-like inclosure, though only one regular place of ingress and egress. Hassan did not take the time to go around to the latter. He ran up a slope at the side nearest to him and finding an opening in the bushes crowning the summit, a place so well known to him he had no trouble in finding it in the night, he let himself down into the pen.

The little field-like space did not contain quite as much as an acre of ground; but everything was so dark within, Hassan at first had the greatest difficulty in distinguishing objects, even those close at hand.

His coming seemed to have produced a certain diversion in the attack of whatever wild beast it was which had broken into the fold. But this was only temporary. The assault was soon renewed, as was manifest by the low growl of the intruder and the piteous bleating of the sheep.

"Bismillah," he cried, partly as an exclamation, partly as a prayer. "Perhaps it is Iblees himself, the chief of the devils."

Hassan at once divested himself of his loose raiment. He cast aside his tarboosh, dropped his heavy abai from his shoulders, letting it fall in a heap by the fence, and stood forth in the full freedom of his finely-formed muscular limbs, not even wearing the sheep-skin jacket of the shepherd, but only the simple cotton undergarment of the country, confined around his loins by a leathern girdle. In this last he had thrust his heavy club, with its rounded knob, his hands being occupied with his rifle. The hair stood erect on his bared head, not from cowardice, but in full realisation of his peril, as he gathered his strength for the conflict.

In whatever the Syrian may be lacking, whatever may be his shortcomings and his vices, under circumstances such as these, he is rarely deficient in courage.

With his physical endowments, it is only natural he should not be wanting in the characteristics generally supposed to pertain to and accompany them, and especially the quality which, in both civilised and savage life, men prize so highly, and which they have named courage or bravery.

It was, as might be expected, with no misgiving or hesitation, and with but little reflection, that Hassan promptly and steadily proceeded against his unknown adversary.

It soon became apparent to him that the wild beast had already seized one of the sheep, and was attempting to drag it away to devour it. No time must therefore be lost if he would save alive the innocent and helpless prey.

For an instant, through the darkness cast by the overhanging cliff and rocks, he had caught the glare of a pair of fierce eyes turned upon him. It was only for a moment that the almost phosphorescent greenish light of those malign orbs, like flaming emeralds, blazed dazzlingly into his face, not giving him time to level and take aim with his rifle.

Nor had he opportunity to repeat the seven salaams from the Koran, recited by religious Moslems in danger or distress. He could only say: "Bismillah — In the name of God."

And now, as his eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, which was far more intense within than without the inclosure, he had a passing glimpse of the strange animal which had broken into the fold, and he knew it was a panther, a species of leopard which now is seldom or never found in that part of the country, though at one time it must have abounded there, and still may be detected upon the Galilean hills, being common beyond the Jordan, in the Moabite region.

It must have wandered out of its district, and gradually lost itself, to be found so far off from its haunts, whether they were in the Mount Tabor range, by the Lake of Galilee, or in Moab.

Hassan recognised at once the formidable character of the creature he had to contend with. He had seen

the leopard in the wild Adwan country, beyond the Jordan, during a visit there, and could not be mistaken. He had also seen the skins of that animal brought in by the Bedawin hunters, who always take the greatest pride in exhibiting them as an evidence of their prowess, telling surprising stories of their desperate encounters.

The leopard — what a profound wickedness is in that creature! He sits, satisfied with himself, and crouches with the determination to proceed further in his evil-doing. He evidently thinks wickedness is the right thing. And possibly it is, for him. At least, to him, his sins are no sins. When God made that creature He must have known what He was doing. But one hesitates to follow the legitimate inferences.

Though Hassan well knew the perilous nature of his position, and that even his life was in jeopardy, he shrank not from the duty before him. He was there to protect the sheep — to defend them from any and every foe, even at the risk of his life.

Long before the days of the Great Shepherd, it had been an established maxim in Palestine that "the good shepherd," by which name he called himself, "giveth his life for the sheep." And it was from such scenes as these, enacted on these Judæan hillsides, that some of the most beautiful pictures and heart-reaching lessons the world has ever received were taken.

Hassan, therefore, instinctively strode forward, levelling his rifle from time to time, and trying to get a good aim, but fearing to fire lest, under the circumstances, he should kill some of the sheep.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the beauty of his form and the exquisitely graceful movements of his shapely limbs, as, all unconscious of his glorious endowments, he advanced upon the foe, without a fear as to the danger to which he was exposing himself. Absorbed in his purpose, everything else was for the moment forgotten.

The semi-darkness added the quality of mystery to the scene.

Meanwhile the leopard had reached a part of the inclosure more removed from the shadows cast by the

cliff and shrubbery, and where the effect of the fast-approaching dawn was more apparent.

For the first time the brave young shepherd got a full view of the bloodthirsty beast which was carrying off his trembling sheep. There the ravening tyrant stood, lashing his tail, and uttering a low growl, secure in his might, and, like most of the members of his tribe, protracting his enjoyment by gloating over his victim and deferring the final acts of slaying, rending, and devouring.

Hassan, raising his weapon, took deliberate aim.

The next moment a quick streak of fire divided the gloom; and a sharp, almost deafening, report rang out on the stillness of the night, already morning.

The immediate permeating silence which followed this detonation seemed the death of all sound. But this was only for a second or so. A wild clash and concussion of echoing reverberations, like volley after volley of artillery, woke up in distant glen, hollow and waddy, and pealed and repealed against rocky cliff and hill,—grew faint, swooned, awoke again,—then died away in a long-drawn sigh,—partially revived in strangely near and loud rumbling and thunder-like claps, buffeted to and fro, followed with resounding but ever more muffled echoes in more remote fastnesses, and finally ceased altogether, when one might wonder whether it would ever cease.

A flock of startled birds rose with clamorous cry from roosting places in the cliffs, wheeling high in air. Nature's peace was broken — her solitude insulted.

When the smoke cleared away, the leopard might be seen having the appearance of being dazed or paralysed.

The bullet had taken effect back of the left shoulder.

But was the wound fatal?

The creature had let the sheep drop, and seemed more stunned by the sudden report of the rifle than injured by the wound.

In a flash, and with the alert action of its kind, it recovered itself, and, goaded by the stinging pain of the ball, turned and sprang upon Hassan.

The leap was made with all the fury and energy of which the animal was capable.

The gray dawn, as has been shown, was already beginning to make itself felt, the coming of the day here being, as is well known, much more rapid than in some other countries; and objects seemed suddenly to grow more distinctly visible, especially in that part of the inclosure where the conflict took place. This was greatly aided by the lifting and parting of a heavy rack of cloud which had hitherto hung low at the eastern horizon. Thus Hassan easily perceived the attack of the enraged pard, — that agile beast appearing to come flying through the air, a beautiful as well as a fearful sight.

The poor fellow might well be appalled at the spectacle. The angry roar, the displayed fangs, the extended claws, the lithe embodiment of frenzied rage united with superhuman strength — few things can be more instantaneously terrible.

Never for a moment had Hassan removed his gaze from the intrepid enemy. And as it came towards him with all its gathered force, and with the accuracy of a bomb from a mortar, determined to overwhelm him at one fell swoop, he kept his place, motionless, to the last possibly safe fraction of time, measured by his keen eye with the greatest nicety; then, bounding aside, he let the tawny monster go swinging past.

The fiery beast reached the ground with a dull heavy thud, barely saving itself from rolling over and over.

With the almost intuitive perception possessed by many of the lower animals in a degree marvellous to us, the leopard had detected Hassan's strategical movement, though too late to recover itself. It had spasmodically stretched out its nearest paw in passing him, with the intention of seizing him, and arresting its course. But it only succeeded in inflicting a slight flesh wound upon his shoulder.

The fight, however, was not yet at an end. The indomitable beast, though baffled, returned to the charge, if possible with redoubled determination.

Wounded as it was, the desperate fall it had received could not have failed to affect it more or less seriously.

It left a little pool of blood where it had landed. It turned and looked at it, as a man might have done.

At first it seemed ashamed of itself, and crept off a little way, — then retraced its steps.

Hassan's first intention was to seize his rifle and reload it. But the renewed attack of the leopard gave him no time for this. He also knew the utter inefficiency of the weapon when employed as a bludgeon. With all its strengthening bands of brass, the first blow would have broken it in pieces, while inflicting little or no material injury on the enemy. He was therefore driven back on his sole remaining munition of defense — his shepherd's club.

This peculiar club is a short stick with heavy round knob, formed of a natural knot in the wood; and from time immemorial it has been the implement of the shepherd of Palestine, used in protecting himself and his flock when in danger. It was, in all probability, with such a weapon as this that David slew both the lion and the bear when he kept his father's sheep at Bethlehem, not far from here, as so graphically narrated by him to King Saul.

And now the leopard suddenly paused, as if it had changed its tactics; but soon began approaching Hassan more cautiously and slowly, walking around him, and then creeping up upon him gradually, and more after its usual manner of attacking and taking its prey. There was a fiend-like glare in its eyes. Its tail, extended straight to its full length, had an ominous snaky vibration at its tip.

In the first instance, the pain of the wound and Hassan's sudden onslaught had infuriated it and set it beside itself with rage. There was, this time, the characteristic cunning and stealthy movement peculiar to the family, seen in its action. Withal, there was a decided vindictiveness or revenge apparent in its demeanour.

The creature avoided Hassan's eye, and quailed before it.

Its richly-spotted tawny hide was brushed by the grass and small shrubs, which partially concealed it; and, at times, its belly almost dragged upon the ground, as it drew fearfully near.

Hassan's heart beat fast, but he held his ground and kept courage, grasping more firmly his simple weapon.

When within a few paces, the crafty feline suddenly quickened its stride to a run, as if to take him unawares, gathering all its energies to make the supreme spring.

Whether in the next instant Hassan felt, or, in the intenseness of his deep expectancy, only imagined he felt, the tremendous impact of that furious hairy bulk, he did not then know, though the effect of the stunning shock was upon him, — the sinking of the claws, the fleshing of the fangs, the death-grip, — for, almost simultaneously, his well-poised club had descended with extraordinary force, begotten of the desperateness of his situation, upon the head of the leopard, crushing its skull.

A second blow immediately followed. It was the finishing stroke.

The claws relaxed; the jaws unclosed. The beautiful terror lay at his feet, a helpless mass of tawny hide, glistening with dark clustering spots like eyes.

The eyes themselves — the real eyes, fast losing their light, as they glazed and changed in colour, had a pitifully inquiring glance, looking out, far beyond Hassan, as if seeking the mountain ranges where lately it had roamed, or a still farther-off land, a mysterious bournless habitation where yet it might have life. This was followed by a despairing, disappointed expression in them, such as is so often seen in the dying, as if they had not found what they sought.

There were a few spasmodic muscular motions, and several unconscious twitchings of the splendid skin over sinews and parts where vitality had more abundantly resided and now clung tenaciously, and the lordly beast stretched his proud limbs to their full extent for the last time.

Soon the *rigor mortis* would seize them.

The life had gone out. But whither?

"Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth?" quoth Solomon.

CHAPTER XII

HASSAN, flinging himself on the ground not far from the dead leopard, lost no time in stanching and binding up the wounds it had, while living, inflicted on his arm and shoulder, he tearing off a strip from his kamis, or inner cotton garment, for the purpose. He also attended to the mauled sheep. The injury in both cases fortunately was of a far less serious character than appearances indicated, and he congratulated himself on escaping so easily from so dangerous a foe.

By this time it was broad daylight, though the sun had not yet risen above the hills, and the eastern sky was all-glorious with crimson and gold, especially at the point where the god of day might be expected to appear.

The sunrises in Palestine are almost as beautiful and rich in colour as the sunsets of other countries.

Drawing his knife from its sheath, Hassan immediately commenced to strip the hide from the yet warm carcass of the beast. This he accomplished in a remarkably short space of time.

He then withdrew to a small pool among the rocks, fed by a rill from the cliffs. Laying aside his garments, he washed the bloody stains from his limbs, and then bathed his body, completing the washing of particular parts according to the ceremonial prescribed by the Moslem religion known as the wudoo, and considered absolutely necessary preparatory to prayer, as without this cleansing, it teaches, no prayer is acceptable to God.

This ablution, *el-wudoo*, is far from being the perfunctory act it is sometimes represented as being. It is, in fact, a religious purification, carried out carefully in the most particular and elaborate manner. Any of the parts of the body which, intentionally or unintentionally, have been exposed to pollution receive the most special attention in the cleansing, which invariably includes the mouth, nostrils and ears (each being rinsed out three times), as well as the face, neck, head, hands and arms, and the feet

and legs. Appropriate prayers are used while each member or organ is purified, and when the entire act is completed the regular prayer is entered on. This chiefly consists of the recitation of the "Soorat el-Kadr" — the celebrated chapter of the Koran so entitled, with the universal preface: "In the name of the most merciful God." This chapter, which, it may be stated, is exceedingly brief, is sometimes recited twice or thrice. It closes with the beautiful words: "It is peace till the rising of the morn." But, it must be confessed, there is little or nothing about it of what strictly could be considered prayer.

Though some Moslems may prove careless in regard to their prayers, and neglect them, there are certain partial washings or purifications which, though not essentially pertaining to prayer, are regarded as acts of devotion, and which are regularly performed by all the men, on occasion. This guarantees a personal cleanliness on the part of the followers of Mohammed, which is unquestionably an admirable feature. They and the Englishman are the great bathing animals.

Hassan, having no seggâdeh or prayer-carpet, nor even a mat, spread his abai as a substitute, as is often done, and had soon finished his devotions to his full satisfaction.

He then entered on the discussion of his frugal morning meal, which consisted chiefly of a cake or two of brown bread, with cheese, olives, and a few dried figs, regarded as a sumptuous repast by the ordinary inhabitant, and for which Hassan's unwonted exercise and cold bath had given him an excellent appetite. His only drink was from the clear, sparkling spring gushing from the rock. He had not, in all his life, touched wine or arack. The beauty of his perfectly-kept body was an openly triumphant testimony that he had never been bitten by that serpent, nor stung by that adder — strong drink. But drunkenness is scarcely ever seen among the natives — especially the peasants.

There was something uncommonly agreeable in the fresh, young face that he turned toward the morning sun with the ejaculation upon his lips: "Praise be to Allah,

the All-Merciful!" It was full of the uncontaminated strengths of exuberant manhood; and, as has been previously hinted, the very redundance of the masculine was the first impression conveyed by him. His natural forces unimpaired, there was a genial ease allied to a boyish simplicity in every expression of his face and in all his movements that was more convincing as to his true character than a score of accusations could possibly be.

Yet there were those who had no good opinion of him, and spoke all manner of evil of him. They charged him with all sorts of frailties and irregularities, and had what they considered convincing facts and statements in support of their assertions.

But we have not claimed him to be an angel or a saint. Are not such exalted personages exceedingly scarce upon the earth, if they are, at all, to be found there? He was, like the rest of us, only a man; and, no doubt, full of a man's imperfections and shortcomings; and, as far as seraphic goodness is concerned, without the least title to it. Still, as compared with his censors, judged from this standpoint, he was no worse than they were, in the sight of his Creator, and was far more of a man.

Let there be no mistake upon the subject. This is no defence of vice. It is not vice. It is nature. Also, it is not pretended that the natives of the land are not without certain manners and customs, habits and doings which, in a people so natural, and so largely primitive, are relatively only impulsive, careless, and almost to be expected, but which would be undoubtedly out of place, inexcusable, and gross, in a highly civilised community. Immemorial usage, too, has sanctioned among the peasantry, from ancient Bible times, many of those practices, while the great mass of them are far older than anything which we are accustomed to term habit, and are one with the natural instinct and affections. In other words, what might be called their sins were to them comparatively no sins. To palliate an offence, however, does not justify it.

Scarcely had Hassan spread the food before him and

commenced to eat, when a slight rustling in the grass and shrubs attracted his attention and caused him to turn his head in the direction of the sound. It was made by Hilwe, who was close at hand, having stolen upon him from behind. She had eluded the vigilance of her companions, coming by a way he had not expected, and arriving much sooner than he had dared to hope for.

She carried on her shoulder, supported by one hand, a small earthen vessel, a jar of the common pottery of the country; and it greatly pleased her to think that, with all his superior acumen, and that peculiar and exquisite perception of the presence of another under the most unlikely circumstances, characteristic of the race, she had managed to surprise him, and come upon him unawares.

Could it be that through the exercise of the opposing desire she had brought this to pass? She had wished to steal upon him, to shock him with happiness.

Her face was radiant with the joy of meeting him, which she utterly failed to conceal, and which, it is hardly necessary to say, drew from him more than one answering heart-throb.

Instantly springing to his feet, he advanced to meet her, and caught her to him in an irrepressible embrace, and with many a warm salutation.

Hilwe had a peculiar beauty of her own which was not of the common order, and was almost rare among her people. True, the young peasant girls of Palestine are frequently good-looking, and sometimes quite handsome, though in this respect they may, in general, be said to be inferior to the men. But the life of hardship which they lead, and which is the recognised lot of the female of the land, soon makes old hags of them. It is exceptional to see a fine-looking woman of advanced or even middle age outside of the limits of Bethlehem or Nazareth.

Fromentin has declared that, among all peoples, the man is unquestionably the handsomer animal.

He may be correct in this. Probably he is, at least, not far from the truth in his statement; though, as a general thing, all sweeping assertions require qualifica-

tion. Certain it is, however, that the idea has taken root; and, moreover, it would appear that, so far as the presentation of the sexes in sculpture is concerned, it is no very new idea, but that the ancient masters had a decided leaning in the same direction, and in their more glorious conceptions and masterpieces chiefly selected the male as their subject rather than the female.

It is doubtful that any one of reasonably artistic culture can visit the collection of statuary in any of the great art galleries of the world without perceiving and admitting the vast superiority of the male as compared with the female in all that is accepted as consisting of the leading excellencies that go to make up that magnificent creation, the human being. Who, for instance can turn from the Apollo Belvedere, the Hermes of Praxiteles, the David of Michael Angelo, or the Dying Gaul, to the Venus de' Medici, the renowned Niobe, or even the great Victory, and the many Minervas, without experiencing a feeling of loss, of disappointment, of a descent to the inferior?

No wonder he feels ready to exclaim that he has hitherto been laboring under a mistake, and that the man, and not the woman, is the more beautiful animal.

But even Fromentin himself would, I believe, hesitate, in the presence of Hilwe, in giving such a decision, notwithstanding the superb endowment of all the manly attributes presented in the person of Hassan. The truth was, as we have already shown, she excelled in her own as he did in his own sphere, each reflecting and yet heightening the beauty of the other — a marvellous duality in unity.

This is the answer to the entire controversy.

They were made for each other. The two made one. It would have been a sin against nature to have separated them.

Let us contemplate it — the beautiful dual creation. Nature in her fearless joy and strength, conceiving — moulding. Should not all men and women be, in this, like Hassan and Hilwe? Is it not a revelation of the Divine thought? Male and female created he them, throughout the universe.

Exceptional mention has been made of Nazareth and Bethlehem. The women of those towns have long been noted for their extraordinary beauty. In explanation, they boast of crusader descent, and doubtless can rightfully claim an infusion of some of the best blood in Europe. A mixture of bloods, if good, improves the breed.

It would have been next to impossible that men of the type and well-known character of those valiant yet far from immaculate soldiers of the cross could have lived as long in the country as they had done, its lords and masters, without leaving some of their seed behind them. Indeed we have record of the marriages of some of the leaders to Armenian, Syrian, and even Saracen women.

There is no question too that in certain places in Palestine and Syria there is much Italian blood, due to the early connection of the Holy Land with Italy, not only under the Romans, who have left their indelible marks upon the country in many ways, such as in the names of the places, the massive pavements, the bridges, aqueducts and roadways that cover its face, and their very coinage with which the soil is sown; but also, in later times, when the Genoese came on their trading expeditions, and the Venetians, under their Doges, had such intimate relations with the Christian inhabitants, and lent material aid to them against their infidel oppressors. In gratitude for this last had not the Italians been allotted streets in the towns of Palestine? And, to this day, are not the silver coins of Venice dug up among the ruins of Samaria? The preservation of the Italian language among some of the old families, residents of the land for hundreds of years, their features and habits, even the very patronymics they bear, contribute to evidences of their descent past gainsaying.

What a wonderful romance lies behind some of those faces that one meets in Palestine! The mystery of mysteries is there. The spectre of the hidden and obscure past makes itself seen and felt for an instant; sometimes, in the flash of an eye, sometimes in the curve of the lip, the distension of the sensitive nostril,

or the carriage of the head. The very motions of the body, the movements of an arm or foot, the erect, proud bearing, or the graceful, courtly salutation, reveal weird glimpses of a period full of fantastic action, before which imagination falls prostrate, dumb and transfixed with amazement, outdone and conquered by the reality. Nothing is impossible under the conditions, nothing too improbable to have happened. What blood, what history lies concealed! Who can know?

Malha, the village where Hilwe was born, and where she lived, is not far from Bethlehem. There must, at first, have been, for generations, more or less intercourse between the people of the two places. How intimate? Perhaps to the extent of intermarriage. Could Hilwe's charms be thus accounted for? Who can tell? In later days, Malha, with positive truth, could claim the Circassian infusion. Hence, it might be, those plantations of roses for the making of rose-water. Hence, possibly, Hilwe's beauty. Hence, also, perhaps, the origin of the blood-feud with Bettîr, that remorseless shadow of an inexpiable wrong, the genesis of which — the very nature of which — no man of either village could describe or even hint at with anything like positiveness.

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the feud — this colossal shade or ghost — spite of its occult origin, stalked abroad in the land, a very perceptible power for evil; like many another impersonated wrong, inheriting, through long lines of descent, an accumulated prerogative, all the more difficult to contend with on account of a certain intangibility which characterized it.

Hassan, having returned to his simple repast, at which he had been interrupted by the arrival of Hilwe, invited the latter to join him in eating. But inexorable custom, as he well knew, was as yet too strong in her to permit her to comply. Besides, she had already eaten before leaving the house. No doubt she preferred waiting on him, according to the habit of the Oriental; and, there is no question, she took a greater pleasure in serving him, and in watching him eat and

relish the food, than she would have done in participating in the meal.

There are other women than those of the Orient whose chief pleasure is to be the slaves of the men they love.

She immediately commenced unfastening the cover of the small jar she had conveyed, and soon disclosed the contents.

"I have brought thee some lebban," she said. "It is of my own making, and such as I know thou lovest."

She next opened a small package of cotton cloth.

"And here are a few of the best olives," she added, "also prepared by me."

While he did not neglect to express his gratification and thanks, she poured into a bowl-like dish, for his use, a goodly portion of the lebban, which is a comestible resembling clotted cream, prepared in a peculiar manner from specially fermented new milk, and having an agreeable acid or lemon flavour.

It has been known in Palestine from the most ancient times. Butter is not used by the natives of the land; and as the making of it was an unknown art to them, there can be little hesitation in believing that where the word butter is employed in our translation of the Holy Scriptures, lebban is meant. Thus, for instance, it was lebban, and not "butter in a lordly dish," which Jael gave to Sisera, that ill-fated captain of the Canaanite army, whom she had cunningly inveigled into her tent, and whom, after hospitably entertaining him, she so ruthlessly murdered while he slept.

Hassan expressed his satisfaction at the refreshing and palatable qualities of the lebban, insisting on Hilwe partaking of it.

"It is, indeed, such as my soul loveth," he said. "Verily thou art as the wise woman, who looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

From time to time he would select some choice portion of the food, and put it into her mouth. This is always considered a delicate attention on the part of the host to the man who is his guest; though of course

it is not practised toward women, as they do not eat with the men. It was therefore an exceptionally affectionate act on the part of the young shepherd, and was so felt by Hilwe.

At the close of the meal, as she brought him water for the usual washing of the hands, Hassan, bending that she might pour it over them in performing the ablution, accidentally disarranged his garment, which slipped aside, so as to show the wounded arm and shoulder which he had rather clumsily bandaged.

"Thou art wounded," exclaimed Hilwe, at once perceiving the blood-stained cloth. "What mischief hath happened to thee?"

Hassan, with the proud reticence of the native, had said nothing to Hilwe of his wounded condition or as to his conflict, and his victory over the leopard. He was keeping it in reserve for her.

"I fear thou art grievously injured. Why hast thou not told me? And what has brought upon thee this evil?"

Hassan, after having deprived the dead beast of its skin, had dragged the body a good way off, where it was quite out of sight, and where already the eagles, vultures and ravens of the valley were gathering to devour the carcass. Thus the rapacious land carnivora are destined to be the prey of the carnivora of the air, and the mighty eater itself at last would be eaten. The skin, the hunter's trophy, he had hung upon a bush to which, it had happened, Hilwe's back was turned, so that she had not observed it.

Hassan was touched by her solicitude; but he maintained his conventional gravity.

"Behold," he simply answered, pointing out the brilliant, spotted skin.

Turning, she directed her gaze to the place indicated, and great was her amazement as she saw what had lately been the garment of the ravenous pard, hanging from the shrub.

They both hastened towards it.

"And thou hast slain it!" she cried admiringly.

"Verily and indeed. It is even so."

"And thy life was in peril."

"Perhaps."

"And I knew it not. And you kept silence, all this while."

Hassan smiled proudly, looking uncommonly handsome before the woman he loved.

"It was a powerful beast," he said, "and fought bravely."

"What terrible fangs and claws it has! It might have rent thee in pieces."

"Ay. But I had to save my sheep," was his reply.

"Tell me about it. Wilt thou not tell me how it happened?"

And forthwith Hassan related to her the story of the combat, as we already know it.

"But art thou not sorely wounded?" she asked, interrupting him.

"No, no. It is nothing," he assured her.

But she would not be satisfied till she had seen and properly bound up the wounds, which, from their position, Hassan had not been able to succeed in doing.

"I am sure this must be the wild beast which has been slaying and devouring the sheep of my uncle Ismail and the sheik, and of Abd-el-nour," she remarked. "They have lost several lately; and many others have been killed beyond the farther side of the hill to the west, as they have told us."

This was news to Hassan; and, with his inventive mind, it did not fail to suggest a certain opportunity to him.

Why should not his achievement — his delivering them from this fierce destructive enemy — give him grace, render him acceptable in the eyes of Hilwe's uncle, and, indeed, of all the people of Malha?

He communicated the thought to Hilwe. They both agreed it was the hand of Allah, interposing in their behalf, and that it should be acted upon without delay.

Hassan commenced at once brushing and preparing the skin, while doing so making an occasional remark to Hilwe regarding his purposed action.

It was evident he was thoroughly aroused in carrying out his design. He intended it should be no half-hearted business. He should now openly declare himself.

Though Hilwe had acquiesced in Hassan's proposition as generally expressed, when it came to the point, and the statement of details, she paused, hesitating and silent.

"I shall carry the skin with me up into Malha," he said, "and shall see the sheik and thy uncle Ismail, and set my cause before them, come what may."

She heard and trembled, knowing the danger, and dreading the consequences. She shrank from the final issue, when thus presented to her, even though she, herself, was but a passive agent in the transaction.

Knowing but too well the deadly rancour of the Thar, she even feared for Hassan's safety — his very life — should he venture to enter Malha without some pervious special guarantee, such as the permission of the sheik, or under the protection of some man in authority, or one held in high esteem of the people.

Something of this she presently tried to express.

"Art thou not venturing much?" she asked with anxious lifted eye. "Art thou not taking thy life in thy hand?"

"Nay, nay."

She failed to convince or even moderately impress Hassan with her views, which he put down to womanish dread — overdue caution.

"Fear not, Hilwe," he replied; "I have counted the cost, and taken thought of what thou sayest, as well as counsel of my heart."

No; he was coming to Malha under such peculiar circumstances, in such friendly guise, as their deliverer from a dangerous and destructive foe which had done them such serious injury, he felt surely he was secure of immunity from harm to his person, if only out of common gratitude for what he had done; and, though he might not be successful in his object, he at least would be suffered to come and go in peace.

She then reminded him of Kadra's failure in his be-

half. How, though she had kept her promise, and acted as his go-between, and "spoken sweet words for him," so far from advancing his cause, notwithstanding the feast she had made for all her acquaintances and friends with the sheep he had given her, she had only succeeded in rendering herself more unpopular than ever, and was now regarded by many of the villagers almost in the light of a traitor and a spy.

But Hilwe tenderly refrained from telling Hassan the evil things they said of him.

"There are many ways of reaching an object without going to it directly," he simply replied. "Thou canst trust me; I know what I am about."

After this Hilwe could offer no further remonstrance.

"Peradventure I am over-anxious for thy safety," she said with a sigh.

Hassan smiled confidently, that deep gentle smile of the man satisfied with the love of the woman he has chosen, and on whom he has bestowed his affections.

"Doubtless it is even as thou sayest. Thy love maketh thee overmuch jealous and careful for me. Nevertheless I blame thee not. Why should I? But take courage. All will be well with thee and me."

"Wilt thou take no one with thee?" she asked.

"I shall take Chalîl, as a witness and companion," he answered. "He is even as my brother — my own self."

He spoke with so much assurance that she could not but feel a responsive chord reverberate within her, and smiled back at him.

It is of the nature of things that those who have confidence in themselves inspire with a similar feeling those with whom they are brought in contact. Hilwe's distrust was greatly relieved, if not altogether removed, by the brave words and manner of Hassan; and she so far responded to his advice as, at length, to become imbued with somewhat of his spirit and hopeful of his success.

From the beginning — from the first breath of love between them, the man, if worthy of the name, is the creator of the woman who lives with him to be his helpmate. This is, doubtless, in some degree what is sym-

bolised by the sweet old story that she was taken out of his side — from beneath his heart. Day by day, month by month the action deepens and intensifies. From the moment that his blood begins to circulate within her, and she becomes, *in prospectu*, the mother of his child, the divine process is inaugurated which makes her blood of his blood, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh.

This is one of the great and holy mysteries of Nature, which seems of almost miraculous essence, linking us with the eternal — holding us within the revolving, evolutional cycles of everlasting life — that which is, ever has been, and ever will be.

Yet it is no more wonderful than thousands of the simple acts which are continually occurring around us, on every side, each day. It is only ignorance which makes anything miraculous or wonderful.

So Hilwe already began to feel the controlling influence of the man who had gained her heart, and who had given her his heart. The gentle yet powerful obedience of pure love was working within her and she calmed her fears, and was glad that she had a faithful breast and a stronger arm than her own to lean on.

"It is time I were returning whence I came," she said presently, "lest my companions miss me, and come seeking me."

"Perhaps it is as well," he agreed, "as also there is much before us to do."

He bade her a very tender good-bye, pressing her to him, and speaking words even kinder and warmer than his wont.

She received all his loving demonstrations with extreme modesty, a passive, pure devotion of inexpressible womanliness which said, "I am thine." The virgin daughter of the Judæan hills had kept her chaste loveliness undefiled. It was with these two as when one rose bends over another rose kissing it, or the pale purple asphodels of Mount Hermon, on their tall slender stalks, shaken by the wind, cling together, and mingle their breath for the space of a sweet moment.

"I have gathered and bound the brush for thee," he

said, just as they were parting. "Thou wilt find it near the Giant Rock beyond the great terebinth, in the place thou knowest, and where I have left it that thou mayest not have far to carry it."

"Allah preserve and bless thee," she exclaimed, "for all thy goodness and lovingkindness to me. It is no little thing this that thou hast done, with the care of the sheep upon thee too."

But he would not let her make much of it.

"It is as nothing for the love I bear thee," he said. "Gladly, if need be, would I serve seven years for thee, even as Yacoob served for Rakel. They would be to me but a few days, for the love I have to thee."

So they parted, and she went her way, though looking back more than once to catch the last glimpse of him, her heart beating fast and warm.

"Verily, she is the married woman whom her husband loves," she said.

CHAPTER XIII

AS soon as Hilwe had departed, Hassan turned and took the leopard's skin and, folding it compactly, hid it in a secure spot, in a cleft of the rock, — a place also affording concealment for his rifle.

He then proceeded, in haste, to gather his sheep once more within the inclosure; for meanwhile he had watered them and let them loose to feed outside on the slopes where now the grass was abundant. This he did in comparatively a brief space of time, and carefully closed the entrance with stones and broken rock.

The day was already well advanced as he deliberately took the way along the mountain side in the direction of Bettîr.

He presently struck into a narrow path, well known to him, for he and his sheep had traversed it many a time, passing to and fro between the village and the pastures.

Like most of the country paths, it was rough and ill-

defined in several places, and often diverged to avoid the vast blocks of stone — the huge masses of rock which had broken loose and had rolled down from the adjacent cliffs, under the shelter of which it ran for the principal part of the way.

But it all was such familiar ground to him, he could have walked over it in the night, as, indeed, he not seldom had done; and his rapid strides soon brought him to that part of the hillside directly opposite to Bettîr.

It was an attractive sight which spread before him. In the clear air, the thickly-clustered houses of the village, gathered together for protection on their craggy heights, as is usual in this country, looked so near they seemed close at hand. Yet the slopes of the hills on each side, and the entire breadth of the valley, with its gardens and fields, its fig orchards, pomegranate thickets, olive groves, and vineyards stretched between, with oranges, citrons, limes and lemons in sheltered places, and almonds and apricots in abundance.

On this bright, pleasant day how serenely fair they appeared! In all Palestine, there are no better-kept gardens. Looking down on them, near by, not a weed, nor intrusive blade of grass could be detected among the legitimate crops, which showed other evidences of faithful culture, and were well watered.

Ah, that last is the secret, the great necessity, in the production of fine crops in this ancient land — irrigation — abundance of water! Here it poured out in a flood — a river of delight — from the rocks on which the village stood, rushing strong and swift, like a stream of liquid silver, in the sun.

Water, living water! What a rarely sweet and pure creature of God it is! cleansing, cooling, refreshing, stimulating, fertilising — emblem of the Holy Spirit of Regeneration — the Comforter — the giver of the Life Indeed!

The rich volume of water is carried in a high, sloping aqueduct of solid masonry across the roadway immediately below Bettîr, spanning it in a single arch, in the shade and moisture of which grow countless sprays,

fronds and tufts of maidenhair fern in great luxuriance — a greenery of gladness. Separated, after its triumphal leap overhead, into many divisions, by numerous smaller conduits, the water is gradually brought down to the gardens, fields, and orchards below, through which it is conducted in innumerable rills that in those lower grounds, like Siloam's waters, "go softly," rippling and singing on their way.

Hassan might well and truly say, as he did declare, in his simple, gentle language to Hilwe: "There is plenty of water at Bettîr. Thou hast not to go far to draw it."

As he now stood on the opposite hillside, and gazed on the peaceful scene, his heart warmed and swelled with the tenderest emotions. It was his home — his beautiful home. From the point where he waited, he could tell every one of the weather-beaten houses of the village; and he knew every one of the persons who lived in them.

But a little way beyond was seen the end of the valley, where the surrounding hills form an ampitheatre, the site of the last rally of the miserable impostor, Bar-Cocheba, against the Roman troops being the extreme towering height, whose summit is still crowned with the ruins of what seems to be the remains of an ancient attempt at fortification. From this is had a commanding view of the Great Sea — the glorious blue-and-gold Mediterranean, rolling in misty atmospheric splendour, but undeniable as a queen in its magnificence. More than twenty-five miles of hill, valley and plain stretch between; and the molten turquoise, sapphire and lapis-lazuli of the matchless waters may be dimmed by the distance, but we know they are there, and the imaginative mind feels the supreme colour.

It is historic ground. Nearly eighteen hundred years ago, the followers of the false Messiah, Bar-Cocheba, "Son of a Star," who was acknowledged by the deluded but sincere Rabbi Akiba, — when they fortified the heights, and made that rally born of despair, must have looked down on these scenes: the peaceful valley, torn with battle, crowded with mailed Romans, on the one

side, and on the other, far beyond, like Heaven in its amplitude, the broad blue sea, ever shifting and changing, yet ever the same.

To-day, the scarcely discernible ruins on the topmost peak are covered with the trailing vines of the sweet-smelling honeysuckle, and the tangled clematis with dark green polished leaves and cream-coloured, nodding blossoms, masks the fallen walls. Here the unfortunate remnant of the Jewish rebels or patriots were pitilessly slaughtered, the horses of the Romans being up to their girths in blood. The aged Rabbi Akiba had been arrested, tried, and put to death with cruel torture, the flesh being torn with red-hot pincers, piece by piece, from his body, — while he, faithful to his belief, with a fortitude almost superhuman, to his last breath, and until he gave up the ghost, continued to cry: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord!"[1]

At a sharp curve in the difficult and narrow road which runs beneath the village, leading to it, there is seen a most peculiar overhanging shelf of rock. It is impossible to resist the suggestion that in ancient times it must have been used as a strategical position from which to hurl masses of stone and other missiles in resisting the approach of an enemy by this critical pass, which the shelf would completely command. And there are other similar points of interest and evidence which here cannot be dwelt on.

But none of these things entered into the thoughts of Hassan, as he stood on the hillside opposite to Bettîr.

He saw the house, — the simple abode which had been assigned to him as having belonged to his parents, deceased when he was a mere infant, — and noted the narrow bounds of the little inclosure in which it stood with

[1] The writer, when, within recent years, he stood on those heights — the Tell of Bettîr — amid those ruins, identifying the place with ancient Bether, and remembering the Rabbi Akiba, in memory of his fidelity and courage repeated aloud to the listening air, and in the ears of the Syrians who stood around, the self-same cry: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord!"

The venerable Rabbi is said to have reached the unusually great age of 120 years. They might have let him end his life in peace.

its hedge-like border of pomegranates. He had but seldom dwelt there of late, he was so much away, tending his sheep; and in such absences he had placed it in charge of his bosom friend, Chalîl, the son of the village sheik. They had often occupied it together, for brief periods of time, being both young unmarried men of about the same age, and intimate acquaintances from boyhood. His friend was probably within it at this very moment.

Hassan had told Hilwe he should take Chalîl with him to Malha. And this it was which brought the former to Bettîr.

Ascending a projecting pinnacle of rock, Hassan, placing his hands in a certain position before his mouth, sent forth, in the direction of the village, a peculiar cry or signal. This he repeated more than once.

He had unwound from his waist the scarf forming his girdle, which he next commenced waving in a singular fashion to and fro.

It was evidently an agreed-on code of signalling; for presently there came across the valley, from Bettîr, an answering cry, and a similar waving of waist-gear. Whereupon Hassan, throwing his voice in a curious, almost ventriloquial manner, desired Chalîl to come to him; when at once Chalîl's reply, to the effect that he would come immediately, borne on that sonorous air, was distinctly heard.

This "throwing of the voice," as it may be called, — this singular conveyance of sound, is, in Palestine, a peculiarity which seems to have its parallel in the great distances at which objects are seen clearly. Both pertain to the country, and largely are due to its atmospheric conditions, though doubtless also governed by special characteristics of locality.

Hassan now descended from his lofty pedestal of rock, and flung himself upon the ground to rest, for, though not exactly fatigued, he had been walking with great rapidity, and besides his conflict with the pard had left its effect upon him.

The sight of the little flat-roofed village house and its pomegranate bushes and fig-trees, which were his own,

made him think of Hilwe, and how happy he might be, could he bring her there as his wife.

The pleasant happy valley to him seemed like Fareidis, — Paradise, — the name from of old given to gardens by this people. But it, too, had its serpent, in the shape of the blood-feud. For, only in a less degree, the animosity and vindictiveness of the Thar was felt in Bettîr as it was in Malha.

Yet he did not dwell overmuch on the thought that, even though he obtained the reluctant consent of Hilwe's guardians, which at best could only be had through the payment of an excessively large backsheesh, the trouble would not then be over. He would still have to appease and satisfy the people of his own village. The greater difficulty, as is usual, presented itself first. That removed, no doubt the lesser one would come in sight, and duly demand attention.

This may be said to be the case all over the world. The minor cares disappear on the advent of the more serious ones. But especially is it so in this land, where the maxim "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" is of particular force, and adapted to the instincts and habits of the people.

Hassan had distinctly seen Chalîl when he left the village and set out to come to him.

"He leaps as a young roe for gladness, as he hastens," he said.

He watched him descend the slopes, and cross the hollow of the valley, by a pathway which led through the gardens, and where his well-known figure was frequently hidden from sight by the fruit-trees. At length, reaching the opposite side, he ascended to the ledge where Hassan stood waiting to receive him.

"I came as soon as I heard thy voice," he exclaimed joyously.

"Verily. And I am well pleased to see thee, as thou knowest," returned Hassan.

Hurrying forward, Hassan almost ran to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him.

The Oriental kiss between men is a sight of more than ordinary interest to those unaccustomed to see it. It is

undoubtedly of great antiquity. Breast to breast, in close embrace, and with enfolding arms, the men lean forward, and first on the right side, then on the left, — literally "falling on the neck," — they each bestow a kiss; and this is repeated, sometimes more than once.

Generally it is only on special occasions, or after an absence of considerable length of time, that the kiss is indulged in; but it is not necessarily so; and the Syrians are a distinctively affectionate people, of which this custom is only one of numerous evidences. As to its antiquity, the Old Testament abounds with examples; the New Testament continuing the record to the time of Christ, — of which the parable of the Prodigal Son is interesting proof. The Son of Man was betrayed with a kiss.

With these unrestrained tokens of feeling, the two young villagers met.

Chalîl, the son of the sheik of Bettîr, was a young man of prepossessing appearance, in that he had a slender graceful figure, an oval face of a light-olive complexion, clear, brown sympathetic eyes, full of light, a well-formed mouth ornamented with a very dark but very small mustache, a straight nose with scarce a hint of the aquiline, and the usual abundance of the strong black hair which so commonly pertains to the men of the country who lead an outdoor life.

His dress was somewhat different from that of Hassan. There was a fine finish and embroidered edge to his inner garments, which were further adorned and fastened with ornamental knobs. He wore a girdle of rich yellow silk around his lithe waist, and his crimson tarboosh with heavy blue tassel had wound about it a cloth of the same material as the sash, but of pure white, sprinkled with stars woven of gold thread. He was, in short, somewhat of a village "exquisite."

But it was his abai or outside robe which showed to the more observant eye a distinctive mark. This was a strip of many colours worn inside the front border, into which, indeed, it seemed woven. Though, from its position, generally concealed from sight, it is this which forms the robe of honour of the eldest son of the sheik, — who

is the young sheik, or heir-apparent. To him alone it belongs. It is of right his inalienable badge.

This is the "coat of many colours" which Jacob gave to his son Joseph — thus unduly exalting him above his brethren, and exciting their envy and hatred. In plain terms, by his act, Jacob clothed him with the insignia of the young sheik — gave him the position which rightfully belonged to Reuben, the first-born.

There was something irresistibly suave and graceful in Chalîl's manner, as he stood on the edge of the natural terrace, still holding Hassan's hand, and asking and answering many questions. He had much interesting information to give respecting the village, which he evidently enjoyed relating; and Hassan was a good listener, — all the better because of his love of the speaker, — though naturally impatient on this occasion.

But all was related in a few minutes. The Arabic is a comprehensive language.

There was not the least reserve between the two, nor the slightest attempt to conceal or restrain the bond of affection existing between them, which was of the most tender friendly character.

As Hassan led Chalîl under the shade of the rocks, he asked him:

"Does thy honoured father, Abou Chalîl, the sheik, know that thou art with me?"

There was a momentary silence.

"I did not think it best to tell him," replied Chalîl. "Thou knowest — "

He refrained, through delicacy of feeling, from finishing the sentence.

"Yes, I know thy father favours not our intimacy. Yet have I never done aught against him; but, on the contrary, ever have honoured and respected him, as thou thyself canst bear witness."

"Thou speakest the words of truth and honesty. It is the only thing in which I have ever disobeyed my father. Nor, indeed, have I done so in this; for he has never positively forbidden our friendship. Though if he had — "

Again Chalîl was silent.

"If he had," took up Hassan, "thou wouldst — "

"I would still do even as I have done."

Hassan pressed Chalîl's hand in acknowledgment.

"Well art thou named," he said. "Thou art a faithful friend. One who sticketh closer than a brother."

Chalîl was to the old sheik, his father, dear as the apple of his eye. He could not bear to thwart him in anything. And yet, often, as in many another case of a like kind, the fatherly interest and affection not infrequently proved somewhat oppressive to the young man, who had far different ideas, sympathies, and pleasures from those of his sire.

The sheik's name originally had been Areef Aweda. But, according to the custom of the country, on the birth of his son Chalîl, he had been given, out of high honour and respect, the name Abou Chalîl, which means, "The Father of Chalîl." This is the almost invariable habit in Palestine, — the father disusing his own name on the birth of a son, and being addressed as — The Father of Chalîl, Selim, Yusef, Saîd, or whatever the son's name may be.

From this may be had some faint perception of the importance attached to male offspring in the East, and especially to the first-born son. It is even more strongly emphasised with the Jews, who, if they have not a son are apt to adopt one, that, believing as they do in prayers for the dead, they may have on their decease some one to offer such supplications for their souls, — for a daughter or female relative cannot be permitted to enter the synagogue for this or any other purpose; while it is especially the duty of the son to pray for the soul of the author of his being as well as for that of the father who has adopted him.

Chalîl, which means "friend," is a name as common among the people of the Holy Land as the name John is with the English-speaking races. It is the name by which Abraham, "the father of the faithful, and the friend of God," is invariably known and spoken of; and this explains its being such a favourite with his descendants and the natives who honour his memory.

Hassan now felt he had no longer any time to spare

if he would carry out his purpose of this day visiting Malha.

Turning to Chalîl, who sat close beside him, he affectionately leaned towards him, and placed his friend's hand on his thigh, after the old manner with men of urging a request or swearing to a promise, — a custom of prehistoric origin.

"Wilt thou, this day, go up with me to Malha?" he asked.

"To Malha?" exclaimed Chalîl.

"Even so. To Malha," quietly repeated Hassan.

"Dost thou mean what thou sayest?"

"Yea; verily and indeed."

The young sheik could scarcely believe he heard aright, and so expressed himself.

Whereupon Hassan unfolded to him the facts in the case, relating to him the events of the morning, including the fight with the leopard, and showing him of what service he could be to him.

"Thou wilt be my spokesman — my daysman," he said.

At the close of his narration, he again put the question to Chalîl:

"Wilt thou go up with me to Malha?"

It was put with the same solemn form as before.

And now, without the least hesitation, came the reply:

"Thou knowest well that I will go. Even should mischief befall thee, it is only the more reason that I should be with thee."

"Thou speakest bravely. Hast thou counted the cost?"

"I have."

"Then let us be going."

They both rose to their feet simultaneously, and set out, without further delay or another word, to return by the route Hassan had already traversed.

They soon reached the old inclosure — the scene of the leopard fight of the early morning, Hassan eagerly indicated to the young sheik the different points in the conflict, fighting the battle over again, to the delight of both of them. It was a brief but rapturous rehearsal, on the very ground where the action had occurred.

"The sheep will do well enough in the pen till we get back from Malha," said Hassan. "I have watered the flock, and cut some fodder for them. Besides, Yusef is coming to spell me. They will be all right."

"Yea, doubtless," responded Chalîl. "I only wish it might be as well with us."

They found the leopard's hide — the peace-offering — safe in the cleft of the rock where Hassan had concealed it. Placing it upon a stout pole, which they carried between them, the young men turned their faces toward Malha, which, as soon as they had passed an intervening ridge, appeared in sight, on its conical tell, — for, indeed, like the city set upon a hill, it could not be hid. In the distance, the tell looked like an extinct volcano, with the village built across the crater.

They walked as rapidly as their inconvenient burden and the rough ground permitted, and in due time found themselves at the base of the tell, where they called a temporary halt, set down their load, and rested.

At this point the surface of the land was covered with an immense amount of loose rock and stones, giving the scene an aspect savage and dreary in the extreme. It conveyed the impression that in a far distant age some enormous glacier had here unloaded itself, melting away after having brought and deposited its millions of tons of *débris* — like the wreck of a planet.

It is probable that Hassan never quite or even approximately realised the difficulty of his undertaking until he sat thus, amid this ferocious scene — this antediluvian rubbish-heap, at the foot of the tell.

Was it not the very threshold of his fate? Had he not reached the edge of the future? How different was the scene on this side from that facing the Wady-el-werd — the cheerful and pleasant Valley of Roses. There seemed something ominous and uncanny in the presentment.

But he had not the least intention of turning back.

Taking up their burden, they once more moved forward.

This time they made but slow progress. The steep ascent, in many places quite precipitous and almost dangerous, rendered it difficult for them, hampered with their

awkward load, to make even moderate speed. Often they were obliged to come to a "dead stop"; and they suffered many a slip and backward stumble over the loose stones as they patiently plodded up the abrupt acclivity, which seemed to be more and more trying as they advanced. In truth they had made a mistake, and had not found the usual and easiest place of ascent, which, at best, is troublesome enough.

At length they reached a point, within a few feet of the apex, where a huge boulder was firmly embedded. Here they stopped to reconnoitre.

"There is not a thing stirring. It seems like a dead place," remarked Hassan.

"No doubt, such of them as are not away are asleep," said Chalîl. "They will come out in due time, like hornets."

He viewed the narrow precincts with the curiosity of a stranger, mingled with distrust.

But it was with affectionate interest Hassan surveyed the place — the abode of Hilwe. This feeling predominated, notwithstanding the unfriendliness, of immemorial existence. He felt jealous for it, and was provoked at any disparagement of it which he was sure Chalîl mentally indulged in, in comparing it with the excellency of Bettîr.

He turned to his friend to give him a last injunction.

"Thou wilt speak for me, Chalîl — thou wilt be my daysman, and plead my cause," he said. "But do not use harsh words to the men. Who knows but, even at the last, their hearts may incline to us, when we speak with them face to face, and when they see they have been delivered from the wild beast. And then — then, forget not they are Hilwe's people."

"Thou needest not fear, Hassan. I shall not talk roughly to the men. I shall be even as thine own mouth, to deliver the words thou hast in thine heart to say. Trust me, I shall speak better for thee than I would for mine own self."

As the young sheik uttered these sentiments, his look was so noble, so full of affection, Hassan's heart yearned towards him more than ever, and he impetuously threw his arm around him while he pressed his hand.

"Allah bless and preserve thee!" he exclaimed. "I know it is as thou hast said. Thou art better to me than a thousand."

The young men now adjusted their apparel. Each shook the dust from his abai and his shoes, and Chalîl drew more tightly about his loins his silk ishdad or girdle.

"Let us go around, so as to enter by the direct way, the gate," suggested Hassan, "that we seem not to break in like thieves or robbers."

"Or as though we were afraid, or ashamed of what we are doing," added Chalîl.

"Yea, thou speakest wisely, my brother. Here; let us turn to the right; and let me, this time, go in advance. Bismillah — in the name of Allah. So be it. We will go forward in the name of the Most Merciful. Who knoweth but he alone whether we be in danger or not?"

And so, bearing the leopard skin between them, they passed quickly to the right for a short distance beneath the crest of the grim, ashen-gray tell, until they reached the regular entrance to the place.

Less than a score of ascending steps brought them to the summit; and Malha, in all its contracted limitations, and almost unpropitious aspect, lay revealed before them.

CHAPTER XIV

ONE of the peculiarities of Palestine is that there are no scattered dwellings — no isolated habitations to be found within its borders. Even the country people, with the object of self-protection, for ages have built their houses in what may be called agglomerated communities — condensed villages on lofty heights or tells. For the same reason, safety as well as seclusion, "high-places" were selected for the erection of altars and sanctuaries for the worship of God as well as for idolatrous practices.

The idea that "there is safety in a multitude" has become crystallised into the proverbs of the land, and permeates its literature. The man with many sons is

described as not being afraid to speak with his enemy in the gate; and the Lord is continually spoken of as a tower, as "my rock and my fortress," and as "a high rock of defence."

Malha in many respects is not very different from the generality of the villages of the Holy Land; except that from the very circumscribed area of the peculiar site, all the conditions which pertain to the ordinary village are here intensified and aggravated.

Hassan and Chalîl, as they reached the summit, at the principal entrance to the place, saw before them an assemblage of flat-roofed stone houses closely packed together completely covering the truncated apex of the tell.

In the midst ran a crooked, narrow passage-way, scarcely wide enough to be dignified with the name of alley, and where two donkeys could barely pass each other or move together abreast. This was the main street.

At the entrance or approach, where they stood, this passage widened or enlarged into what the most fertile imagination might convert into a plaza, piazza, or square of the most diminutive proportions. Around a curve in the narrow way they caught a glimpse of the village oven, proportionately not much smaller than some of the houses, with a heap of ashes before it. But not a man, woman, or child was as yet visible.

The acrid smell of the smoke, a predominant feature, was to them not as noticeable or disagreeable as it would have been to one who was a stranger in the land, as it is a characteristic common to all the villages of the country, and therefore it was a familiar smell, — a mark of relationship or identity, — and regarded by them as not particularly objectionable, but perhaps rather the opposite.

Several pariah-dogs, of a dusty or reddish-yellow colour, and with smooth skins, and erect pointed ears, suddenly became apparent. They had been lazily dozing in the sun; but awoke, shook themselves, and, perceiving the new-comers, gave vent to a succession of startling barks and yelps.

This immediately called out several of the women, who at once gave the alarm; and in an incredibly short

interval of time it seemed as if the greater part of the population had swarmed upon the scene, so that they filled the narrow space in front of the visitors.

Hassan and Chalîl, who had deposited upon the ground the leopard skin, made the usual salutations with more than ordinary respect. These, through the natural courtesy of the people, involuntarily, and on the first impulse of the moment, had been returned by the men who stood nearest, and among whom might be recognised the sheik of Malha, and Ismail, the uncle of Hilwe.

Others, who had commenced to return the obeisance, suddenly checked themselves, while in some instances scowls and looks of anger darkened their countenances. Among the latter was a man considerably past the middle age, with penetrating black eyes, hooked nose, and long, weather-beaten face, which was much wrinkled, and of the colour of soiled leather.

This was Abd-el-nour. His dark beard, of medium length, and his hair were slightly sprinkled with gray; and from the malign expression of his features, and his active communication with those who stood about him, he evidently was infecting the men with the proper spirit of hatred he himself possessed, and which he considered justified by the intrusion of the men of Bettîr.

Among the women and children, who remained in the rear, were Kadra and Fatima, who quickly understood the meaning of the scene; but there was no appearance of Hilwe. Yet, not very far off, she viewed the unusual spectacle through a lattice, her great luminous eyes moistening and dilating; and she even overheard almost every word of what was said.

The dogs now began to approach the leopard's hide, aud cautiously sniff at it. To them it was an unknown enemy. Some of them turned tail and ran away, after the brief olfactory experiment, seeming to consider "discretion the better part of valour." The few that remained kept at a safe distance, and gave vent to an occasional yelp or growl.

If curiosity is a strong characteristic of all peasants, more especially is it so of the fellaheen of Palestine. And this alone would have gone far to modify and appease,

at least for the time being, the feelings of the men of Malha towards their hereditary enemies in the persons of the two young men of Bettîr who had ventured among them, to convey the skin of this strange wild beast.

The sheik and several of the prominent men of the place drew near, expressing their wonder, and making many comments on the beauty and large dimensions of the hide, and wanting to know who killed the animal, and where and how it was killed. They called it Nimr or panther.

Most of the younger men had never beheld or heard of such a creature, though two or three of them declared they had seen the same beast or one like it, near where the sheik's and Abd-el-nour's sheep were killed. They were sure it had been the devastator of their flocks.

The sheik repeating his desire to know all about it, Chalîl saw his opportunity. His time had come. With the tact of the born orator and story-teller, he had waited for the favourable moment before beginning to speak.

As he stepped forward a pace or so, — leaving Hassan slightly in the rear and on the other side of the handsome trophy, — and opened his mouth, pouring out, at first slowly and with great dignity, but soon with extraordinary volubility, the living glowing words, the rapturous sentences descriptive of Hassan's adventure, his conflict, and victory, every eye was fixed on him, and every ear strained to extreme tension to hear him.

From the very first the grace and enthusiasm of the man captured them. He was transfigured before them. The beauty of nobility exalted him.

As he told of the attack of the leopard in the thick darkness, the glare of the eyes, the horror of his roar, the piteous bleating of the helpless sheep, — all was realized by those imaginative people. It was as though their hearts and brains were harps, and he swept the resonant cords with passionate power and at his own will.

It was an epic. Full of Oriental colouring, it was a rhapsody of word-painting. There was no actual falsifying, but here and there, with consummate art, he strengthened a light or deepened a shadow, till the

entire action stood revealed like the masterpiece of a great painter.

As he spoke, he carried these simple men on his words. They reached towards him eagerly, — longingly. He was as their breath to them. They saw and heard as he desired. They dreamed his dream; they thought his thought; they felt as he felt.

They saw the gray dawn, — the cool river of day pour over the red-burning bars of the east, till the hills and valleys were flooded with the white blessedness, and everything awoke to the exultation of being, the joy of existence, — everything but the once fierce-lived leopard. That lay dead, slain on the threshold of the morning. He had accompanied the entire marvellous recital with that peculiar illustrative action of the East which seizes as its accomplice every movement and expression of the body. Gesture after gesture projected, emphasised and acted out each incident, feeling and bearing of the story, — things that words could not say. Weird movements of the hand and fingers, arms, and feet, exquisite motions of the head, and effective mobile employment of eyes and mouth, in indescribable and innumerable array, lent themselves to his purpose, and carried out his meaning to the ultimate limit of suggestiveness.

As Chalîl paused for a moment, their intensified feelings seemed ready to snap like the over-stretched vibrant string of a musical instrument. Then came a half-suppressed breathing, as if of one united sigh of relief, followed by scarcely articulated syllables of admiring wonder:

"Taieeb! Taieeb! — Good! Good!"

He heard them, but did not notice. He seemed not to care.

He had left the leopard dead.

There lay its skin before them.

It was no fiction, — no mere story, — no dream. It was reality.

Lowering his voice in a confidential manner, so that only those in his immediate vicinity might seem to hear, though all heard him, he turned to Ismail, Hilwe's uncle.

"And this young hero," he said, pointing to Hassan, "the conqueror of the strong, the slayer of the devourer who slaughtered thy flocks, comes to thee softly, humbly. He speaks not a word for himself. I, who am not worthy to mention his name, or wipe the dust from his coundra — his shoe — I am his daysman, his advocate. He has stripped the proud raiment from the vanquished, and lays the noble trophy, — the token of his manhood, his strength and courage, — as a present and a peace-offering at thy feet. It is as naught to what he is prepared and willing to give thee. Graciously be pleased to accept this offering, and grant that he find favour in thine eyes. He is at thy disposition. Treat him kindly. Thou knowest that, according to the usage of our land, he has presented his suit through a woman of thy people."

Scarcely had Chalîl concluded the last sentence, when various inimical cries were heard, interrupting what further he would have said.

A short while previously Abd-el-nour had approached Ismail, and had spoken in his ear threatenings and words of bitterness, while at the same time he promised to add largely to the amount he had pledged to give him for Hilwe. He also had not ceased to foment among the other men the traditional hate.

The murmurs now became louder, and various discordant cries, among them that of the "Thar," resounded on all sides.

Chalîl attempted to speak, but his voice was drowned in the confusion.

"Let not this dreamer beguile thee with deceitful words!" exclaimed Abd-el-nour. "Remember the Thar."

Chalîl dropped back beside Hassan, who, in turn, after a similar failure to make himself audible, also was obliged to remain silent. He stretched out his hands imploringly; but not a word of his was heard.

At this juncture Ismail, with Abd-el-nour and several followers, pressed to the front.

The uncle of Hilwe was evidently greatly excited, violently waving his arms high above his head, and

was indulging in the most inflamed language, the greater part of which was lost to Hassan and Chalîl in the din.

But the latter part of Ismail's words were but too distinct.

"Thou comest here," he said, addressing Hassan, "but we have not invited thee, nor given thee any encouragement to enter. Thinkest thou to instruct us, and dost thou expect that we shall set aside our ancient customs at thy pleasure. Allah forbid! Who art thou, indeed, that we should regard thee? We know thee not, nor thy generation. It is not meet that we should have any dealings with thee; much less that we should give thee our daughters to wife, or receive the daughters of the men of Bettîr as our sons' wives. As for thy gift, it is naught to us. We accept it not. Take it, and get thee gone with thy friend to thine own place."

Suiting the action to the word, he and those with him seized the leopard skin, and hurled it towards Hassan.

It was the most bitter insult which could be offered, — the return of a gift, especially when so presented.

The scene which ensued baffles description.

The people, who but a few moments before had been listening in such enrapt attention to the words of Chalîl, seemed suddenly possessed of demons. They surged forward in a rush, waving their arms threateningly, uttering loud opprobrious epithets, and almost beside themselves with rage.

The bland musical accents of the graceful young sheik might and should have gone far to pacify and ameliorate the angry and discordant feelings of those who heard him speak with the voice as of an angel. But prejudice, with distorted eye and ear, is a cruel and implacable thing. It turns honey to gall, the beautiful to the hideous, and good to evil, riding roughshod over the amenities of life.

The Sheik of Malha, though stunned by the tumult, evidently entertained a sense of gratitude and kindly feeling for Hassan; but it was in vain he tried to stem

the torrent, counselling moderation and reason, and repeatedly saying there was no necessity for such violence. He and the few who stood with him were thrust aside and hustled rudely, in the outbreak of the turbulence.

He saw immediately, to his mortification, that in the madness of the hour his authority was utterly ignored, and that the old vindictiveness was in the ascendency, and the passions of his people were beyond his control.

"Isma' hatta ihki lak — Listen, that I may speak to thee," implored Hassan, in a last appeal to Hilwe's uncle.

"Iskat ma berid isma' minak — Hold thy peace, I don't want to hear thee," came the contemptuous reply.

Hassan seemed bewildered.

"Thou hast sojourned with the Nazarenes. Wouldst thou teach us their ways and doctrine? Get thee hence. We want thee not," were some of the words hurled at him.

Chalîl, who had counselled Hassan to hasten his departure, now helped him to gather up the leopard skin; and they at once turned to leave, the crowd closely pressing upon them, and using abusive language.

They were occasionally roughly handled, and all their expostulations fell on deaf or unfriendly ears.

In the midst of this fearful scene — this sudden burst of fanaticism, poor Hilwe, beside herself with terror, rushed screaming from the house, with what intention was not apparent.

"O Hassan, they will slay thee!" she exclaimed.

But she was brutally pushed back by her uncle and Fatima, who, shutting the door upon her, overwhelmed her with vituperation and sarcastic mockings, in which department of speech the fellaheen of Palestine are accomplished, indeed skilled adepts:

"Ha, hah! We laugh thee to scorn. Thou art even one of the froward daughters. Cry aloud. Call upon thy lover. Peradventure he will hear thee, and come to thine aid."

Poor Hilwe, she thrust her fingers in her ears to dull the cruel taunts, and flung herself, in agony of mind, upon the floor of the leewan or raised part of the room, tortured with the thought of the ignominious usage bestowed on her beloved Hassan and his friend, and torn with the fearful dread that their lives were in danger, and would fall a sacrifice to the hateful Thar.

"I feared it! I feared it!" she cried. "Did not my heart tell me? Did I not warn Hassan?"

She covered her mouth with her hands to smother the pitiful cries and sobs she could not restrain. But there was none to commiserate — none to console her.

"Poor fellow! Poor Hassan! They have killed thee and thy noble friend. And it is all for me."

Lifting up her voice, in the anguish of her despair, thus she lamented and wept: —

"Oh! my beloved! why am I not with thee? Why am I not beside thee to stanch thy wounds — to raise thy head — to comfort thee with sweet words? As one whom his mother comforteth, so would I comfort thee. Mayhap, even while I speak thou art numbered with the dead, — art gone down into the noisome pit, and art even as those who are not. Better also that I were dead — that I were not in the land of the living, but in the abode of darkness, than that I should survive to see this foul day. Better that I had died the hour of my birth."

Kadra, hearing her lamentation, drew near and stood beneath the narrow unglazed opening which served for a window, and would fain have soothed her.

"O little goat, don't die, for the spring and the sweet grass are soon coming," she began in the tender metaphor of the East.

But Fatima would not permit it; and the sharp-tongued, yet not ungrateful recipient of Hassan's generous backsheesh in the shape of that fat sheep, was obliged to withdraw without being able to communicate further with the grief-stricken Hilwe.

"It is the work of the evil eye which hath brought this to pass," concluded Kadra. "But, even now, I

will get me to the old watch-tower, whence I can see, unobserved, the outcome of it all."

She hobbled off, in her awkward slippers, in the direction mentioned.

"I advised her to wear the blue beads about her neck, to ward off the bad influence," she muttered.

As Hassan, following Chalîl, reached the edge of the declivity, and turned to take a last look at the place, with the hope of seeing Hilwe, and with the feeling, which was but natural, that he was not fleeing as a coward, even though in the presence of superior numbers, he encountered Abd-el-nour, face to face.

Grim, satyr-like, and diabolically malevolent was the gleam of those deeply-set black eyes, filled with the gathered tenebræ of generations of hate. Of all the inhabitants of Malha, he it was who cherished most persistently the traditions of the Thar, — believed the most thoroughly in the application of the unholy doctrines of the blood-feud.

He was like the presiding evil genius of the place.

"Hah! I have met thee, then, O my enemy!" he exclaimed, and began to curse and swear.

Seeing Hassan encumbered with the leopard skin, he suddenly smote him upon the cheek with the palm of his hand.

It was a spontaneous outburst of his spitefulness.

"Interloper," he shouted, "hast thou ventured into our stronghold? Take thy punishment!"

He evidently was emboldened by the near presence of several of the younger men.

Hassan was astounded for the moment. His cheek tingled with the sharpness of the blow; but that was as nothing to the indignity.

"What wrong have I done thee, that thou smitest me?" he cried.

Hampered as he was, he raised himself to his full height, and in a flash, hardly knowing what he did, for anger, dealt such a buffet in return, with his open hand upon the face, as sent Abd-el-nour staggering backward to the ground.

It is seldom or never, even in severe fights, that the

natives strike with the clenched fist. They generally are satisfied with buffeting, or smiting with the palms of their hands.

Thus, indeed, was Christ smitten, when they mocked him, in the palace of the high priest.

"Art thou called Abd-el-nour — Servant of Light?" retorted Hassan, with the greatest sarcasm. "More rightfully shouldst thou be named Servant of Darkness, for thou art the child of Iblees — the Evil One."

Abd-el-nour, as with difficulty he arose, clutched a heavy stone, which he prepared to hurl at Hassan. But the latter, perceiving the act, had promptly picked up a similar missile, and stood ready to retaliate in kind.

The vindictive man of Malha, seeing he was detected, and fearing the result, slowly unclosed his fingers, and cautiously and regretfully let the stone which he held drop.

Chalîl had, meanwhile, rushed up to Hassan, and, catching hold of his arm, besought of him not to throw the stone he stood ready to hurl.

"It would be madness," he said. "It would bring all of them upon us in an instant. And what should we be among so many?"

As he spoke he gently took the fragment of rock from the hand of Hassan, who willingly yielded it up.

"Thou art right," he said to Chalîl. "My wrath got the better of my judgment. His insults are hard to bear."

But Abd-el-nour's anger was now intensified.

"Get thee gone. We want none of thee, waladu'z-zina — illegitimate one — bastard," he shouted.

Hassan, already descending, again paused. The bitter cruel taunt stung him all the more keenly in that he had never actually known his parents; as already has been shown, they having died when he was a mere infant. To him they were a dream — an idealisation. All the more tender and sacred were they to him, because, for him, they had never been mingled with earthly cares or doings. And yet there was a mystery surrounding the matter, at least something

unusual about it — a varying from the ordinary, that made his case exceptional, perhaps unpleasantly so. His childhood had not been like that of others. Well had he known and felt it. There is, spite of all we can do and say, a blight — almost a certain stigma — connected with orphanage. Yet he was a strong, shapely man, finer and handsomer than most men. Nothing seemed able to prevent that.

He would have rushed back on his persecutor, hardly knowing what he did, his innate stamina asserting itself, had not the less impetuous Chalîl again checked him, restraining and holding him.

But he could not prevent his calling to Abd-el-nour:

"Were it not for thy years, thou son of perdition, I should have dealt more severely with thee."

To this was returned the repeated slur, yelled more loudly than ever, —

"Waladu'z-zina. Waladu'z-zina."

It was maddening.

"Hearest thou what he says? Oh, the cursedness of it! Unhand me, Chalîl. Let me get at him."

"No, no; thou must not. What matter the words of such an one as he? No more than the cry of the partridge in the pasture, the twittering of the sparrow on the house-top, or the whistling of the wind blowing over the reeds. Who careth or knoweth what they say?"

"My blood boils to hear him. I cannot bear it."

It was all Chalîl could do to control and pacify his justly enraged companion.

"Hassan, let us get hence, out of this corrupt place, without delay, lest worse befall us. It will be dark before we get half-way back."

So Chalîl besought his friend; and Hassan, loving him well-nigh as his own soul, hearkened to his voice, to do as he advised.

They had proceeded but a short way down the precipitous tell, when a shower of stones fell upon them.

"They come thick as hail," said Hassan.

"This is what I feared," returned the young sheik.

Hassan could see that the missiles were thrown by

the young people of the village; who, doubtless, were incited thereto, if not aided and abetted, by their elders.

Fortunately, so far, the stones had failed to do any serious injury; all but a few falling short, or flying wide of the mark.

A succeeding volley proved to be more effective. A third one was still more dangerous. It evidently proceeded from nearer quarters, showing the fugitives were pursued. Then came a much closer and fierce attack. Both Hassan and Chalîl were struck several times, the former receiving a wound upon the head. There followed the sharp crack of a rifle.

Hassan, having been the means of drawing Chalîl into the trouble, felt in honour bound to bring him safely through, if possible. He insisted upon his going in advance, repeatedly urging him forward, while he himself fell back, and acted as a check or rear-guard, receiving the brunt of the battle.

In the scuffle in the village, they had lost their pole; so Hassan had thrown the leopard skin over his shoulders, and thus carried it. He said it was like a shield, and protected him from the stones. But, no doubt, it was an encumbrance to him. Yet he would not leave it in the hands of the enemy. It would be like deserting a battle-flag.

Half-crazed from the blow on his head, and partly blinded by the blood which trickled over his face from the wound, he made a desperate charge upon their assailants, who for the moment having gathered confidence, had approached nearer than usual.

They, however, had seen him grasp a fragment of rock as he turned; and, seized with a sudden panic, the treacherous fanatic creatures fled incontinently, nor paused till they reached near to the summit of the hill.

This gave Hassan and Chalîl an opportunity to escape; and though the assaults from Malha were renewed, they were now comparatively harmless.

True, for a time, the stones flew around with such liveliness, it might appear as if the words of the old

psalm were put in action, — that the mountains had begun to skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs. But this materialisation of the ancient text was not of long continuance.

The two young men felt thankful when they reached the foot of the tell; and, battered and weary as they were, they courageously struck out across the rocky plain toward their destination; though this, for a time, exposed them to the rifle-shots which, at intervals, pursued them from Malha.

CHAPTER XV

"IT was desperate work while it lasted," was Hassan's first remark on getting away.

"Thou sayest," acquiesced Chalîl. "There were times when I feared for thy life."

"And I for thine. Truly they pressed us sore."

"It was not because of their will that they did not make an end of us."

"Ay. They tried hard enough."

"Kismet."

"Yea, Kismet, Chalîl. It is written."

"Yet it was all for naught," rejoined the young sheik, "that we adventured so much."

"Who knoweth?"

"Nay; but that is how it looks."

"What meanest thou? Dost thou think because of what has come to pass, through the base counsel of mine enemies, I shall desist from my purpose, and yield up Hilwe to Abd-el-nour? That be far from me."

Chalîl sighed.

"Poor Hilwe," he said. "She seemed in despair. I fear it will go hard with her."

"Didst thou see her?"

"Even so. Didst thou not hear her cry? And didst thou not see when Ismail and Fatima thrust her back when she would fly to us?"

It so happened that from the position where Hassan stood it was impossible for him to observe the pitiful scene which was distinctly visible to Chalîl.

"I neither heard nor saw what thou describest," confessed Hassan, with evident chagrin. "Art thou sure thou art not mistaken?"

"As sure as that I live."

Hassan hung his head thoughtfully.

"Then thou sawest what I did not see."

Chalîl made no answer. But Hassan heard him sigh more deeply than ever.

"Perhaps the love I bear her — the love that consumes my very heart — makes me hear and see and feel what otherwise I could not," thought the young sheik. "But nothing of this must Hassan or Hilwe know."

Every word he had spoken in Malha for his friend had been baptised in his heart's blood. It was truly a sevenfold test of his friendship.

Of all who heard Chalîl, not one, not even Hassan, had the least suspicion of the pain he felt. It was like the bulbul that sings the sweeter for the thorn against its breast. For Chalîl loved Hilwe all the more passionately for the desperateness and hopelessness of his case. And it took all his fealty to his friend to sustain him through the cruel ordeal.

In pleading for Hassan, had not the devoted Chalîl been inspired by his own love?

How different were the thoughts and feelings of the two men this evening, as, in returning, they traversed the wild rock-strewn soil, — how different from what they had been so lately, when, to save Hilwe from her impending fate, with high hopes, not, indeed, untempered with a certain leaven of solicitude, they had strode over the same ground on their way up to Malha. The very landscape took on a more gloomy, desolate aspect, and the long, wavering, attenuated shadows of pointed cliff or solitary olive-tree, cast by the fast declining sun, seemed like gigantic warning fingers of portentous doom shaken at them.

In their hurried retreat, the wounded Hassan had begun to show evidences of exhaustion.

More than once he had stumbled, and at last would have fallen, had he not been caught in the arms of the faithful Chalîl, who now perceived the serious condition of his friend, and insisted on relieving him of the leopard skin. This he had previously attempted; but Hassan had resisted; possibly with a feeling of pride and reluctance to give up what hitherto he had carried as a trophy and protection, now that it had become merely a burden.

It came to pass that when the immediate pressure of the necessity for resistance was removed, he felt the accumulated effect of all he had gone through during that eventful day. He suffered also from the peculiar faintness caused by the loss of blood. For Chalîl discovered that the wound in the head, under the rude and hasty bandaging it had received, had, unknown to them, been rather freely bleeding.

He now stanched and dressed the wound, to the best of his ability, while Hassan sat, patiently enough, on one of the smaller boulders which lay strewn around looking like a flock of sheep.

"Didst thou know thou wast bleeding?" asked Chalîl.

"I saw some drops of blood fall on the stones when I stooped over. But I thought nothing of it. I suppose I have left a red trail behind me."

Chalîl saw that this was so. In passing along so rapidly, they had not observed it at the time.

"I ought to have noticed it," he said, and blamed himself.

"It is nothing. Blame not thyself. Why shouldst thou? I won't miss the loss of that much blood. It will do me good. I felt the moisture running down my back and sides, but I didn't think it was that. I took it for sweat."

Hassan laughed reassuringly.

"And now I perceive the crimson stains have even streamed down thy legs. Between the leopard and the people of Malha, surely thou hast been mauled."

"I shall be none the worse for it, but mayhap the better. I tell thee it is nothing. Though if we could

reach the Giant Rock before dark, it would be well. We could stop there overnight."

"Yea, thou sayest; it would be well. Thou couldst never get to Bettîr, in thy present state, in the darkness. And the night comes on apace. Thou couldst not even reach the ain on this side of the wady."

"Perhaps thou art right; though I believe it was but a passing faintness that came upon me."

The rest, and the stanching of the wound in his head, had the effect of greatly reviving Hassan, and he wanted to go forward at once.

"If we can get to the great rock," he said, "we shall do well enough."

"I would we were there," said Chalîl, who feared his friend might again give out, before reaching shelter for the night.

"Then, in the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, let us go," returned Hassan.

So once more they set out.

This time they walked hand in hand, as do men who love each other, and are more than brothers in their friendship.

The red lights had flamed up and died out again and again in the western sky, and great patches and hollows of sombre violet penumbra, deepening into black, were gathering and spreading over the land everywhere. These, slowly but surely, were swallowing up the little that remained of the last gleams of day, by the time they reached the shelter of the great rock.

As they approached the Giant Rock — near yet remote, material yet spiritual in its grandeur and salvatory power — the rugged mass rose before them in the dusk, high and shadowy, like a vast living personality, vague yet mighty. It had stood thus, through countless ages, the symbol of one able and willing to save. There was a cleft, like a gaping wound, in one side of the rock. This was not a cave, but a deep fissure having a narrow level space within it, in which several men could easily find shelter. It was a well-known refuge, often resorted to in storms by the shepherds, as a retreat to hide in till the tempest be past; or, as in the present instance, by

belated wayfarers who sought it as affording security and a resting-place for the night.

Here it was that Hassan and Chalîl, climbing up into the cleft, were only too glad to find themselves. Spreading the leopard's skin upon the rock, Chalîl placed a block of stone beneath it at one end, which answered for a pillow; and, wrapped in their abais, they lay down together, side by side, in the darkness.

What a relief — what a gladness it was, after all they had gone through!

Before lying down, Chalîl had re-examined Hassan's wounds, and replaced the bandages.

"Art thou better?" he asked.

"Yea. I never felt better in all my life," came Hassan's reply. "And thou? How dost thou feel?"

"Oh, I escaped with but a few trifling bruises. I feared thy loss of blood."

"I feel as strong as a young bull of the herds. Thou needest have no fear for me."

"It is well."

"Believest thou what I say? See how I take hold of thee."

Hassan playfully grasped his friend over the arms and shoulders, holding him as in a vice.

A slight struggle on the part of Chalîl ended in his submitting with a laugh.

"There!" he cried. "I believe."

Hassan was much the stronger of the two; and in their friendly contests from boyhood up, generally had maintained the supremacy. And he now was tenacious lest it should appear that what he had passed through had weakened him, or in any way impaired his strength — the great pride of man.

The healthy, temperate peasant of Palestine has stored away within that lithe and graceful body of his a wonderful reserve of endurance and recuperative force. He walks around in the burning fevers of the country, when they fasten on him, with his pulse at an unbelievable height. He bears pain with a stoical and fatalistic calm, and under severe surgical operations, or accidental or other injuries of moment, exhibits a com-

posure which, though sometimes attributed to obtuseness or want of sensitiveness, might rather be ascribed to something very like fortitude and manly resolution. His wounds and sores, too, heal with an ease and unusual rapidity, often under the crudest or most barbarous treatment. This, probably, is due largely to his simple and natural mode of living.

Some of the native surgery is quite of a surprising character. For instance, it is not uncommon to see a fellah having the surface of his entire back branded with a red-hot iron — a favourite remedy for rheumatism. The repeated application of the iron to the shrivelled, sizzling flesh, is borne by him without the least shrinking, or the slightest murmur. And though modern science informs us that the pain endured under such circumstances is far less than it has the appearance of being, and that the contact of the branding-iron has the effect of immediately dulling or destroying the finer susceptibility of the nerves, there still must remain an amount of torture not easily submitted to with equanimity.

So Hassan, rejoicing in the fulness of his manly strength, was not willing to admit that his late experiences had in any manner or degree abated or injured even temporarily the vigour of his natural powers. Nor in reality had they done so to any material extent. Of this he was prepared to give, and did give, Chilil ample proof, reiterating that the blood-letting, if anything, was salutary.

They had cast themselves down to rest in that welcome cleft in the rock with the abandon of men who are thoroughly weary, — too tired, at first, to feel hungry, or think of eating. Yet, fatigued as they were, they did not fall asleep. The excited state of their minds, the result of all they had undergone, had the effect of keeping them awake. Their sleep might be said to have gone astray.

Neither was the barking of the jackals in the neighbouring cliffs conducive to repose. The sharp reiterant yelps of those noisy prowlers, hunting in packs, continued to disturb the silence of the night; and would

have gone far to tax the somniferous qualities of the fabled Seven Sleepers themselves, had they been exposed to such merciless influences.

But, jackals or no jackals, the case probably would have been the same. With so much to think of and talk about, once the young men began, they gave free rein to the inclination and the indulgence of the imaginative faculty, and there appeared to be no end to it.

After some restless tossing, especially on the part of Hassan, Chalîl complained of being hungry, and said he believed if they had something to eat, they could sleep soundly.

"I, too, am hungry, and also am chilly; and I am more thirsty than either," said Hassan. "And that reminds me that there is left in my scrip a cake of the bread with a handful of the olives and figs, of the portion the lad last brought me from Bettîr. It is not much; but may help to sustain us till the morning. Oh, that we had a draught of the water from Ain Kârim; or better still, from our own village."

"Let us get down and make a fire to warm thee," suggested Chalîl, "and we can eat by it. I saw some dried brush on the other side."

"It is well said. No doubt the brush is some of that I left there for Hilwe, and which she could not carry away."

While Hassan spoke, they had slid to the base of the rock; and Chalîl brought some of the dried fuel, which was close at hand, and began laying it for a fire. In the mean time the former commenced striking sparks with the flint and steel always carried by the peasant of the country, and with the aid of the ready tinder soon had a comfortable blaze.

As they sat, side by side, warming themselves, the firelight, streaming full on Hassan, revealed the gouts of blood which had gathered and dried on his forehead, and had matted and stiffened into points the locks of his hair. He looked like a warrior returned from the battlefield where his cause had been lost. This gave to his handsome features a pathetic sadness, which touched Chalîl with a feeling of the tenderest sympathy.

How strange was the bond uniting these two! How peculiar the affection which, day by day and year by year, from their boyhood up, had grown and strengthened, binding them together as with bands of steel!

It was almost amusing to see how frequently Hassan, with all his dominancy, was obedient and compliant when brought in contact with Chalîl, often deferring to the latter's judgment. And yet, in experience and information, Hassan was in no degree inferior to Chalîl, but the reverse.

The one was of an ardent temperament — impulsive, imperative. Chalîl, as deeply passionate, was more sympathetic and tender. There was, in fact, an emotional phase to his character, united to an intuitiveness which was almost feminine. The æsthetic grace of all his movements as well as the refined and pleasing regularity of his features, but, above all, the charm of those amber-brown eyes, now languidly sensitive, now ablaze with ophidian-like scintillation, more than hinted at — gave outward evidence of this.

But, as is shown, despite the masterful disposition and determination of Hassan, he often was found yielding to the gentle persuasions of the more amiable Chalîl; it even gratified him to give way to the decided yet quietly expressed opinions of the latter; nor did he feel lowered in so doing, — as a man does not feel hurt or degraded in consenting to the soft solicitations of his wife.

Both of the friends had all the fervour of youth; a quality, perhaps, more fully possessed through life by the men of Palestine than by most men of other nationalities with any pretence to being civilised.

The fellah is apt to be very much a child of larger growth. Light-hearted, and having the savage's hatred of law and order, except where of his own ordinance and acceptance, and though early experienced in what pertains to the natural man, and in advanced age he may be wise after a certain kind, he is ever and always fervid, and when least expected may be found giving way to the impulsiveness and enthusiasm as well as the self-indulgence of youth. He is a survival of the

incipient man. He is of kin with his surroundings, — out of place when removed from his own environment. The passionate earnestness of the child remains in him, even after he has lost his innocence.

There are times, in a world like this, when it would seem as if a man must be very simple or very wise — or perhaps both — in order to do right. The harmlessness of the dove may sometimes be in place. Then, again, the wisdom of the serpent is demanded. But to be, in the full sense of the word, a man, is the one glorious, unimpeachable attainment. It is what we were intended to be — were made to be. And after man — the angel.

But can we not be angels now — here? comes the question from that troublesome interrogator who will not be still.

Ah! Have I not often told thee we are neither saints nor angels? Poor heart! Poor fool! Be a man! That is the best thou canst be.

Chalîl and Hassan, with all their faults and shortcomings, were "men and brethren," according to their light and generation. If it was said the standard was not the highest, it might also be added, they compared not unfavourably with the men of the land, and their imperfections were the failings of their people and of their race. They were men, but with the heart and brain of the peasant.

They had made their fire near a large fragment of fallen rock, which was broad and flat on top, and which served them as seat as well as table for their scanty meal. The thick darkness closing around them, gave their illuminated figures the effect of highly-coloured mosaics set in black onyx. It was intensely picturesque.

Having no water, they manifestly could not perform the customary ablution. But they had used instead the sand which, blown in eddies by the winds, had gathered at the foot of the rock. And sand, in a case like this, the Moslem religious law permits to be employed as a substitute for water.

With the sand, therefore, they had cleansed themselves as far as possible, as do the faithful when in the desert where there is no water, and where only dust or sand is

found for the purpose. They had rubbed with it their faces, and their hands and arms, repeating the prescribed ejaculations, which is considered sufficient, under the circumstances. It was hard for them to eat with unwashen hands, or to pray without purification.

With the courtesy which ordinarily pertains to this people, recognising invariably any distinction of rank or position, however slight, Hassan, notwithstanding the great familiarity of the two, on taking the bread from his pouch, had handed it for distribution to Chalîl. He also gave him the few figs and olives which had been saved from his morning meal.

The bread was the flat circular cake of the country, baked with the fire made of the residuum — the dried refuse of the olives, left after the oil is pressed out, and which is carefully gathered, and kept for that purpose. The principal food of the fellah, to whom it is, in a peculiar sense, the staff of life, the main support of his existence, this bread may well have for him almost a sacred meaning, and be symbolic of life itself.

Though dark, well-nigh to blackness, it was to them inexpressibly sweet and nourishing, especially in their present hunger.

Chalîl at once assumed the gentle office which had become his duty. Taking the bread in his hands, he bent his head and said some few words of blessing, of thanksgiving, and of praise — some simple ascription to Allah. Then breaking the bread, he divided it between them, giving Hassan the larger portion. Likewise he gave to him of the olives and the figs.

But Hassan would not have it so.

"My brother, thou hast defrauded thyself," he said. "Thou hast given me the goodly share, and kept but little for thy portion."

"It is sufficient, my brother," was Chalîl's quiet answer.

"Nay; but I cannot have it so," returned Hassan, insisting upon a more equitable division.

"It is all right, I tell thee, Hassan. It is well."

"How can I eat what thou hast given me, while I see thee with so little?"

But Chalîl refused to accept the portion which Hassan so urgently was returning.

"Suffer it to be so, Hassan," said the young sheik, in a tone meant to be decisive, and as if ending the question.

"Wilt thou not be persuaded?"

"Thy share is no more for thee than is mine for me."

"How can that be?" exclaimed Hassan, impetuously.

"Thou needest it more than I do. It is enough. Say not another word."

Was there not here the eucharistic grace? Who knows how much of the spirit of a true and holy sacrament lingered in the kindly act — how much of the spontaneous thanksgiving, the sublime self-abnegation of the Divine Man? It is often in small and simple deeds that the true character is shown.

At the little mountain town of Nazareth there is, at this day, an enormous boulder, of such peculiar proportions as invariably to excite the remark of the stranger on his first seeing it. Fashioned and carved by Nature's hand alone, its flat and smooth upper surface, sufficiently large to accommodate more than thirteen men when seated upon it, gives it somewhat the appearance of a table, as it lies, slightly embedded, on the slope of the hill. Upon this boulder — this table of stone — tradition says, it was the habit of Christ to break bread with his twelve disciples.

It is easy to believe such a tradition.

How sweet such a meal! — To eat the bread broken by the hands of the God-Man! Yet we can do this every day if we remember him.

It was a double breaking — the breaking of the bread — the breaking of the fast. It also had a double meaning — the feeding and nourishing of the body, and, above all, the esoteric significance, of which it was the outward and visible sign — the sustaining and elevating of the spirit and the soul through the communication of the Word.

As these two young men, sinful as they were, sat and ate their slender meal, even so it was that, nearly two thousand years before, that chosen group — one of whom

was a traitor, the son of perdition — on the bare rock (that table of stone on which had been graven the "new commandment," teaching the brotherhood of man, "Love one another") had sat and eaten in the open air, with the holy grandeur of simplicity, free of all belittling sacerdotal pomp and splendour. And he, the Great One, the Divine Love, had sanctified the frugal repast, and made it a love-feast, an agape, a sacrament. He who had said: "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God," added: "This is my body. This is my blood. This do in remembrance of me."

Surely it is not the mere act, but the spirit of the act, which glorifies. It is the spirit which quickens. The flesh profiteth nothing.

Although Hassan had acquiesced in Chalîl's insistence regarding the distribution of the bread, — as they half reclined, leaning against each other, on the couch which Nature had prepared for them, he took the opportunity of, from time to time, breaking off pieces of the food and putting them, with many an affectionate epithet, into his friend's mouth, according to the brotherly Oriental custom. In this way he had managed to counteract, to some extent, the effect of Chalîl's generosity, even though the courteous attention had been returned. Yet had he not been successful in his fraternal purpose, the lovingkindness of the act — the feeling which had gendered it would still have remained to comfort and strengthen.

As Hassan placed a morsel of the bread within Chalîl's lips, he said:

"Surely, Chalîl, until the appointed time arrives, the labours of one's friends are of no avail, else would thy words have prevailed this day."

"Yea, all is in the hands of Allah," responded the young sheik. "Yet, when the camel wants straw he stretches out his neck."

"Ay," returned Hassan; "and he is a lazy fellow who sits at the foot of the date-tree, and climbs not to get the fruit, waiting till it falls in his lap."

CHAPTER XVI

TO two strong, lusty young men, as active and hungry as were these, the meal could scarcely have been a satisfying one. Besides, it had the effect of intensifying their thirst. Hassan felt this all the more because of his wound, which made him feverish.

"Would that I had a draught of the water of Malha or Ain Kârim to assuage my thirst!" he cried.

"Or, rather, of the fountain of Bettîr," interposed Chalîl. "There is none like that for coolness and for sweetness."

As thirsty people are apt to do, Hassan thought of all the streams and pools and watercourses he had ever seen, and how he had wantonly bathed in the lavish element. He remembered how he had splashed in it, and wasted it, and come dripping from it, and the many times he had stooped and drunk freely and carelessly from the rivulet out of the rocky cliff, by the hillside where he kept his sheep; and, as in a dream, he saw the great fountains that sent an abundant silvery flood over the aqueduct at Bettîr. How often he had rested in its shade, beneath the great arch, where the moss and ferns grow so thickly! How plainly it rose before him! Yet he had not a drop to cool his tongue. But, more than all, he recalled the day when first he had spoken to Hilwe, and she had given him to drink of the freshly drawn water of Malha from her pitcher.

"Ah, how satisfying, how refreshing! How it gladdened my soul!"

He uttered his thoughts aloud: for it seemed as if he saw the maiden of Malha once more before him, as if he held her to him, while she poured the living water, through his parched lips, into his heart — into his very soul. And he loved her — loved her — loved her. He loved her as never before. His whole life — his body and soul were awake and afire, throbbing and thirsting for her.

Suddenly he started from his seat, and stared out into the darkness, as if he would see through it.

"She is coming. I hear her footsteps," he cried.

"Who is coming?" asked Chalîl.

"Hilwe."

Chalîl thought him feverish, and that his mind was wandering; and taking hold of his hand, to feel his pulse, he found it of a burning glow, and the pulse-beat high and almost too fast to count.

"Thou art consumed with fever," he said; "and thy blood is hot in thee, and plunging like a young stallion of the plains. Lie down, and take some rest, and I shall cover thee. Let us get back into the cleft, where we can sleep till daybreak, when thou wilt be better, and we can go upon our way."

But Hassan seemed not to understand.

"Listen! Didst thou not hear?" he exclaimed, after another interval.

He stooped, placing his ear to the ground.

Chalîl shook his head and smiled.

"I hear naught," he said.

He would have detained Hassan, but the impetuous fellow broke away from him and outside of the little circle of light into the circumambient darkness, which was all the denser — more impenetrable to the eye — for that central core of fire.

"O my beloved, wilt thou not stay me with comforting words, and the pleasant water, as in the day when first I asked thee to give me to drink, and thou didst not refuse me? Sweet are the waters of Malha from thy hand; more to be desired than the living waters of Bettîr."

So Hassan murmured on, in a rambling incoherent manner, as if regardless of his surroundings — regardless of everything but the one idea which possessed him.

"Did I not tell thee?" he said. "I hear her voice. She is even here. I behold her!"

Chalîl thought Hassan beside himself.

"It is his craving for the water hath deranged him," he said. "Would I could find some for him."

But the next instant, the firelight shone upon the slim figure of a girl, gliding like a spirit out of the darkness.

"Hassan!" cried a clear treble voice.

Chalîl could scarcely believe his senses. It was Hilwe. Nothing could exceed the rapturous delight of Hassan, which he did not attempt to conceal. He forgot his thirst in his joy, and when she held the water-vessel to his lips he could not drink.

"It is from Malha. It is sweet and cool," she said.

Taking it from her hands he carried it to Chalîl.

"Thou hast more need of it than I have, Hassan," said the young sheik, refusing it. "Drink, and may it refresh thy soul. And after thou hast satisfied thy thirst, I will drink."

The vessel was one of those peculiar porous water-bottles of the country, provided with a spout more than midway up the side, giving it some resemblance to a teapot.

To Hassan's repeated urging Chalîl politely declined to yield.

"Nay. I will not drink till thou hast drunk," he reiterated.

Seeing he was determined, Hassan desisted from his importunity.

"Since thou wilt have it so," he said.

Throwing back his head, he raised the vessel several inches above, and poured the water in a stream into his open mouth, without once touching with his lips the spout.

The deftness and nicety with which this drinking in common is practised by the peasants of Palestine, and the very idea of this peculiar utensil, made for the purpose, are evidence of a refinement and delicacy of sentiment in such matters which one would hardly be prepared to find among this people.

In fact, it must be admitted that races pretending to and boasting of a vastly higher state of civilisation, as compared with these peasants, are deficient, and come short in this direction. The single tin cup in the pail of water is continually used in common by mixed gangs of labourers in the chief cities and harvest-fields of Europe and America, without a thought, or a qualm, or the least hesitation as to its expediency.

It is such unexpected touches as this, pertaining to the simple fellaheen of Palestine, which give one pause, and arrest condemnation, at least so far as sweeping accusations regarding their neglect and uncleanliness are concerned.

Long and deep Hassan drank of the refreshing water, cooled by that porous earthen bottle, and then passed the welcome vessel to Chalîl, who having drunk from it in like manner till he assuaged his thirst, passed it back to Hassan.

It was new life to them — as well it might be — this beautifully mysterious element, this gathered dew of Heaven, full of light, refreshment and purifying energy, — the chosen emblem of the holy power conferring renewed existence, springing up to everlasting vitality.

When the fierce drought in the men, which had so devoured them, was appeased, the pangs of hunger laid hold of them, — for what little food they had had was but as a morsel thrown to a famished wolf.

But for this too, Hilwe was prepared. She had brought in her hurried and secret departure what she could lay hands on in the shape of bread and cheese, and also some of the thin flat cakes made of the pulp of the grapes, pressed and dried in the sun, and studded with nut-kernels and raisins, and which will keep perfectly good for years.

How they extolled her thoughtfulness and generosity as they partook of her timely bounty, receiving the food from her hand, as she waited on them, and praising Allah who had sent her to them in their distress!

When they had eaten and were filled, they began, with Eastern dignity, which despises hurry, to question Hilwe as to how she came, and how she managed to find them.

"Did I not in my spirit hear thee call for me, and beseech of me to give thee to drink?" she asked, turning to Hassan. "Yea, verily. Indeed, I thought thee wounded, and perishing for want of sustenance. Thou didst draw me to thee. I could not help but come."

So, in her simple unaffected words, Hilwe explained

what she had accepted without hesitation or a doubt — that subtile communion of kindred souls, which takes no count of distance or other material impediment, but, clearing the grosser elements, immediately and surely recognises and penetrates to its own.

"It is true," returned Hassan. "I knew thou wast coming. I heard thee. I felt thee."

Turning to Chalîl, he appealed to him.

"Did I not tell thee of it?"

"It is even so," answered the young sheik.

Poor, love-sick Chalîl. He averted his eyes, groaning inwardly, and fain would have gone away. The love-passages between Hassan and Hilwe cut him to the heart — tried him to the utmost — more than he felt he could endure; though he had supposed he had schooled himself to sustain the pang.

"Were it any one but Hassan," he murmured, "I could not bear it."

No wonder his heart was sore, for he loved Hilwe truly. Nor, from the first, had he been able to control the passion which had become part of his very life, and seemed to root itself more deeply and inwardly, because of its secrecy, and being deprived of outward manifestation.

"He is even as myself," he would say, trying to restrain himself. "Why should I feel so?"

But in such a case, reason and argument have little effect. The fact that your rival is your bosom friend, is not sufficient to heal the wound he has made.

"A man cannot command and master his feelings as, with bit and bridle, whip and spur, he governs his horse," mused Chalîl. "And many waters cannot quench love. For love is strong as death; and jealousy is cruel as the grave, as saith Suleyman the Wise, and, surely of all men, he knew whereof he spake."

But from aught he said or did, none could know Chalîl's sorrow, he hid it so effectually.

"How didst thou escape?" inquired Hassan of Hilwe.

"I even stole out while they slept."

"And how didst thou know to come here?"

"Kadra told me she had seen thee go in the direction of the Great Rock; and I felt sure thou wouldst abide there overnight. Forsooth, I feared the worst for thee, as the men of our village boasted they had wounded thee sore."

"But how couldst thou find the way in the darkness?"

"Ere it was quite dark, the rock loomed up like a pillar of cloud against the glow of the sky. And when all was blackness, and the rock and the way were lost, and the eye could no longer discern the path, nor the feet find it, but kept wandering out of it, the heart failing for fear, suddenly the rock flashed out — a guiding shaft of fire."

"It was even our kindling of the brush that lighted it up," said Hassan.

"Yea. It was well," interjected Chalîl.

"At first I was terribly affrighted, and said to myself, 'It is the work of the jinns, who, with their bale-fires, would lead astray, and to destruction,'" continued Hilwe. "But soon I perceived what it was, and took courage; and so arrived where I would be."

"The jackals and hyenas are abroad."

"Even so. I heard them."

"And thou didst venture all alone!"

"Nay, nay; Kadra came with me. She even now waits for me, not a great way off."

A low laugh, between a croak and a chuckle, succeeded the words.

"Kadra," exclaimed both Hassan and Chalîl at once.

"Ay, Kadra," replied the irrepressible gossip and scandalmonger of Malha, immediately appearing upon the scene.

The temptation of warming herself at the fire, and her curiosity to know how it fared with the young men of Bettîr, were too much for her; and she had gradually drawn near, till at length she stood in their midst, almost before they were aware of her presence.

As she stooped over the fire, stretching out her hands to it, to catch the warmth, her sharp cynical manner began to manifest itself.

"I verily thought to find the young men lying stiff and

cold, a feast for the ravens; and behold, they are much alive and active, and better off than many a dead king. Our pity has been wasted upon them, and our compassion poured out like water upon the sandy desert."

"Say not so, Kadra, say not so. Thou hast been to us a great deliverance in our sore need; and we praise Allah who sent thee and Hilwe to us. We were well-nigh perishing for thirst; and our hearts and our souls thank thee for the sweet refreshing thou hast helped to bring us."

So spoke Hassan, quick to mollify the untoward spirit in her.

"And thy companion, the sheik's son, who lately had so many sweet words to speak for thee, how is it that he now is silent, and that thou speakest for him? Has he been wounded? Is his strength gone from him? Has he lost his voice? Or is his spirit cast down within him?"

Chalîl, thus rallied, smiled a rather sad pitiful smile, and roused himself to reply.

"I have not been wounded, O wise woman, but am sound and whole, every whit; praise be to Allah. My friend has spoken for me, and thanked thee for both of us," he said. "Yet, thou speakest truly; it is not enough — no words could be enough in such a case. Even if I could turn them into rubies and pearls, it would not suffice. But if thou couldst see our hearts, then, indeed, thou wouldst know our gratitude. I can say no more."

The expression "wise woman" greatly delighted Kadra.

"It is enough, honourable and highborn young man," she said, "I kiss thy hand, my lord." She suited the action to the word, kissing his hand twice. "What we have done for thee is as nothing. Our hearts gave it. I spake but to try thee. I longed once more to hear thy pleasant voice and comfortable words; and I feared by thy silence thou wast hurt in body and soul through the evil deeds of my people. I am ashamed for them this day. Yet it is not for such as I am — a poor

despised woman — to revile my generation, or to lift up my accusation against my kindred."

"Surely that could not be expected of thee," acquiesced Chalîl.

"But, woman as I am, I could have hurled over the cliffs some of the cowardly ones who so ill-treated the defenceless strangers within our gates."

"Thou hast the spirit of a man in thee!" cried Hassan flatteringly.

"I doubt if that were saying much for me, to judge of some men," scornfully sneered Kadra. "I care not to be likened to them — the foolish ones, without wisdom or understanding, but like unto the brute beasts that perish."

Salaaming politely to Chalîl, she had prefaced (according to custom when mentioning anything disagreeable or unclean) the last offensive terms with the word "ajellack," a courteous qualification, equivalent to "saving your reverence," or, as we would say under like circumstances, "save in your presence," and which might be taken as an apology.

Turning to Hassan, she repeated the gesture.

"Ah, Hassan," she then said, with softened manner, "by coming up this day thou hast blotted out all that I have done for thee, and made it as though it were not."

"Nay; prophesy not evil for me, Kadra. Who knows but it may be for the best."

"For the best! How can that be?"

"Do we not often see that the time of trouble is a turning-point? and have we not a proverb which says 'It is darkest before the dawning of the day'?"

"Verily thou speakest as a man of faith. Great must be thy faith."

"Wouldst thou have me utterly cast down?"

"Thou knowest I would not; and that I have thy welfare at heart. Yet, at the risk of offending thee, can I not withhold my opinion. It would have been better for thee to have restrained for a time thy desire toward the damsel, that afterward thou mightest have obtained the fullest recompense. Meanwhile I should have watched the opportunity to advance thy cause. He who

would steal a minaret first digs a well to hide it in. But thou hast wantonly exposed thyself. Thou hast taken the bit between thy teeth, and gone headlong."

A smile of superb complacency parted for a moment the rich scarlet of Hassan's lips, showing that proud gleam of milk-white ivory within. Beginning in a smile, it ended in something closely resembling the defiant expression of the wild animal when it shows its fangs.

"Thou little knowest me if thou thinkest I am in the slightest swerved from my purpose by aught that has happened. I am more determined than ever to thwart Abd-el-nour."

He drew himself up to his full height, and his whole manner changed to one of extreme solemnity.

"I swear in the name of our prophet, even Mohammed," he continued, "not to yield in this thing while there is life left in me, but to resist, even to the death."

He lifted his hand on high as he spoke, and placed it reverently on his head.

It may be said that swearing by Mohammed is, to the Moslem peasant, the most impressive and binding of oaths. Indeed, in general, the fellaheen hold it to be more sacred than swearing by Allah. It combines, too, an older form of adjuration — the swearing by the head, condemned, along with other swearing, by Christ, who recommended instead the simple reiteration — the "Yea, yea," and the "Nay, nay," so commonly practised to this moment in Palestine.

All present were greatly moved by Hassan's manner and the awfulness of the oath. His calm determination had the effect of temporarily silencing Kadra.

But Kadra's silence, from the nature of the case, could seldom be of long continuance.

"Allah grant thou mayest have thy will," she said presently. "Mayest thou have the maiden of thy choice, even Hilwe, to wife. And may thy children and thy children's children rise up and bless thee."

Now, as a good wish in the East requires, as expressly commanded in the Koran, that it be responded to by a better wish, or, in other words, be returned with interest, Hassan could do no other than rise to the occasion.

"Allah bless and keep thee," he said, "and give thee a man right proper and comely, and of thine own people, to protect and cherish thee, and to stand between thee and trouble; and mayest thou prosper and see thy posterity prosper to the third generation."

Such a beatific smile illumined Kadra's face that her gaunt and withered features, in all their tattooed ugliness, for the moment became almost agreeable.

"Thou hast wished me a good and noble wish," she said. "Allah grant it may come true."

Her coronet of bishliks trembled and tinkled with her eagerness and delight.

"So be it," simultaneously responded Chalîl, Hassan and Hilwe, as if it were an antiphonal chorus.

"Yea, so may it be," reiterated Hassan.

He pushed his tarboosh carelessly backward, while a merry thought showed itself in the twinkle of his eye.

"But, Kadra, how comes it to pass that thou hast not already found a man to honour thee? Verily I thought thy widowhood should, long ere this, have been turned into joy, and that thou shouldst have been given a consolator — a spouse after thine own heart, and better to thee than those who have gone before."

She moved her head in a sagacious manner, implying much, but said nothing.

Seeing she spoke not, Hassan continued:

"I should think the men of Malha were deficient in their duty, did I not suspect that thou thyself art the real cause, and that thou art hard to please."

"Thou sayest," she at once replied, catching the suggestion. "It is not every man would please me. Besides, to me it is an old story, and as a tale which twice hath been told."

In this she alluded with light touch to her two former matrimonial episodes.

"But, Hassan," she continued, "I can wait. Think not I am in so desperate a case, or such ardent haste as thine."

This sally was far from displeasing the young man to whom it was addressed. Few men would feel aggrieved at having such an insinuation brought against them.

Again the rich scarlet line of Hassan's lips parted beneath the dark upward-curving mustache.

"Hear what she says, Chalîl," he cried, turning to his friend, in the proud gladness of his heart.

Chalîl made an effort to respond, rather a sickly smile flickering about his mouth.

"She speaks words of understanding," he said. "Happy shall be the man who calls her wife."

Kadra's cup was full. The fine compliment from Chalîl set it overflowing. She advanced towards him, holding herself uncommonly erect, and with a stately air, which was greatly aided by her flowing white headdress, and her other loose-floating drapery, swayed gracefully by her movements. She bowed herself as she came opposite to him and, raising his hand to her lips, kissed it twice.

"Again I kiss thy hand, my lord. Blessed be thou, and thy father, and thy father's father. Allah give thee length of days, and to see thy children's children. Thy words are sweeter to me than the honey fresh from the honeycomb. Not because thou didst commend thy handmaid, but because wisdom and knowledge pertain to thee, and thou speakest the words of verity and goodwill with golden lips from a guileless heart."

The several rows of convex bishliks strung across her tan-coloured brow glowed red and pale, lustrous and dull, by turns, in the firelight, and gave an impressive sibyl-like character to her tall spare figure.

Those silver Turkish coins represented her two dowries. It is only the direst distress or some fearful crisis that will compel even the poorest peasant woman of Palestine to part with them.

The transient traveller, as he holds one of those pieces in his hand, wondering at the peculiar saucer-like shape into which it was wrought when appropriated for a bridal tiara, and puzzled by the flowery agglomeration of ornamental Turkish text which adorns one side of it, being the name of the Sultan who reigned when it was struck — little does the wayworn traveller, the passing stranger from a far-off country, imagine the struggle and the tragic life-history which, again driving it into

circulation, hides beneath that bevelled punctured coin, held by him so carelessly. So it is that life is jostled and hustled, driven and trampled; and one man knows not of the pangs which rend another man's heart — yea, though he be his neighbour.

Chalîl bore the adulatory attention of Kadra, which could hardly have been agreeable to him, with the patient grace which is seldom wanting in the Oriental. Some simple words of thanks from him, accompanied by elaborate gesticulations, were sufficient. It is not expected, nor would it be seemly nor well, to bring the woman into too great prominence. There is no necessity of special thought in this, nor suspicion of wrong. It is merely inexorable habit.

Meanwhile Hassan had taken the opportunity to pour into Hilwe's ear some secret communication, with the soft dalliance that lovers feed on, and that man and woman, all over the globe, spite of custom and decree, and heaven and earth, or Sheol itself, will indulge in, though their very lives the next moment be the penalty of the infringement of the offended dignity and majesty of social law or stilted etiquette.

Here behold the fine balance, the nice discrimination, of human nature. On such delicate distinctions and adjustments, with such hair-trigger appliances we live and move and have our being.

But Hassan's opportunity was of short duration. As Kadra left the young sheik, and returned to her former place at the fire, her sharp eyes fell on the lovers, and she at once perceived the situation.

Remembering her duty and responsibility, and only too well pleased to exhibit her brief authority, she faced them with a certain asperity and dictatorial manner peculiar to the Orientals, and prized by them above measure when the occasion is afforded to use it.

"Hilwe," she exclaimed, "what art thou thinking of, at this time of night? We should be half-way back ere this. Arise, let us be going."

"I am even waiting on thy word," answered Hilwe, gathering her garments about her and preparing to leave.

"Be not in haste. Stay yet awhile," murmured Hassan, proudly standing beside her.

"Nay, that cannot be," said Kadra. "We have remained too long already."

"It would not be well, Hassan," softly acceded Hilwe. "I shall leave the vessel of water with thee. Thou canst hide it in the hollow of the rock, where we can find it on the morrow."

"Then, at least, I shall accompany thee back — see thee safely home."

"There is no need of so doing," interrupted Kadra.

"The jackals and hyenas are about," suggested Hassan.

"Thinkest thou that I fear them?" she said. "Nay, rather they fear me."

When Hassan would have further expostulated, she would hear no more.

"Shouldst thou be seen with us, our lives would not be worth a potsherd," she said. "Besides," she added, "thou art weary with what thou hast endured this day, and needest rest."

So the women departed.

Yet as Hilwe slowly followed Kadra, Hassan could not refrain, but overtook the damsel, his soul yearning for her.

"Hilwe," he said, "thou hast twice this day brought comfort and refreshment to me. Allah bless and protect thee. Think not that I have lost courage because of this that has happened. Trust me, I shall yet deliver thee from thy troubles."

He watched her till the darkness hid her from him; then came to Chalîl to be consoled.

The young men, overcome with fatigue, were but too glad to seek the couch they had prepared in the rock, and, at Chalîl's suggestion that sleep was the best comforter, at once turned in. Nor did they wake till dawn of day.

Then instantly they were astir, and soon upon their way.

When they reached the little pool beyond the sheepfold, under the cliff, they stopped and bathed, washing

from their bodies all removable traces of their conflict at Malha; and especially did Hassan cleanse him of his blood-stains. In dressing his wounds, Chalîl was as kind and helpful as before.

"Verily," he said, "blood is not washed out with blood, but with water."

As they passed the place of Hassan's encounter with the leopard, they were attracted by a peculiar whirring sound. It was like the singing of the air when beaten by wings.

Hassan had drawn the dead body aside, and thrown it into a hollow, down the lower cliff. The sound came from this spot. Two hideous-looking vultures, those most ghastly of scavengers, disturbed at their work of gorging themselves on the carrion, had spread their pinions with the slow lazy motion characteristic of the unclean tribe, and had sullenly risen, hovering overhead with that indifferent indolent mien which cloaks their rapacity. A third foul creature, with talons fixed in the carcass, and flapping his wings, still remained, as if undetermined whether he would desist from his detestable task or not, his naked red head and neck glistening in the sun, and with that horrible snake-like crook which is so significant, accompanied by the malicious gleam of his eye.

Surely the eater was being eaten! The carnivora of the air were devouring the destroyer of the flocks and herds — the ravager of the land.

A great crow or raven croaked from an adjacent rock, its black plumage giving off bluish reflections; and, high in the heavens, two gray eagles were passing and repassing, as if watching their opportunity to descend. Further off, so distant they looked like dark specks above the pink and drab of the horizon line, several other eagles were approaching.

Of a sooth, "wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

"A sorry end for the proud beast," remarked Hassan, somewhat regretfully.

"Yea; but consider how he would have ended thee and our sheep," returned Chalîl.

Early morning found the young men in Bettîr, where the leopard-skin was a wonderful sight, and a great attraction to the villagers. Hassan was the hero of the hour; and the people, crowding around him, were never tired of hearing him tell the story of his fight with the wild beast, in which he was the glorious victor.

But both Hassan and Chalîl were careful to suppress reference to their unfortunate adventure at Malha, and the repulse and shameful treatment they had received there. And when, afterwards, the affair became known, they greatly modified and smoothed over the worst features of it.

"Let us not add fuel to the flame," they said. "The hate is bad enough already."

CHAPTER XVII

"DIDST thou see the blooms Amne found yesterday?" asked Fatima of Hilwe.

"I have seen them. She showed them to me."

Hilwe answered in a subdued, almost depressed tone, as if anticipatory of something disagreeable, and that the question of her aunt and foster-mother was but the prelude to personal reflections far from flattering, and the opposite of complimentary.

"She has gathered the firstlings of the season. She has had the advantage of thee. Hadst thou been as active as thou mightest have been, thou wouldst have got them."

"She knows a place where the white blooms come early every year; and she keeps it secret."

"And why dost thou not find out for thyself such a place? Many a metalik or piastre thou mightest bring in — and we want it badly enough, Allah knows — if thou wouldst only watch thy opportunities. When I was thine age, there was n't a damsel of the neighbourhood could excel me in anything. For that matter, why not

spy upon her, and learn her secret haunt, and get the better of her?"

"I should not like to do that," replied Hilwe.

"Why so?"

"It would seem like robbing her."

"What foolishness! The place is as much thine as hers. It is open to the sky, and to the winds and the dew. The bees and the birds come and go there; and so mayest thou. Any man, woman or child may enter and take of the blossoms. What could she say didst thou go there to-day and gather them in? How could she help herself?"

"I do not know. But it would break her heart."

Fatima laughed loud, and long, and scornfully.

"No doubt it would vex her, and make her angry. It well might. She makes a goodly sum out of those flowers. Knowest thou not that this is the flower the Nazarenes call the Rose of Sharon, and to which they say their prophet Issa ben Maryam — Jesus, son of Mary — whom they make a god of, and worship, likened himself. Therefore they prize it exceedingly, and place it on his shrine in the Holy City. Amne will make well by those early blossoms. The Greek, the Armenian and the Latin monks will pay her a high price for them, and backsheesh too. And thou couldst do no better than to get a bountiful store of them, and take them into the market in Jerusalem, where thou canst easily dispose of them to the Nazarenes. Also, as well, to the True Believers. For they too love the sweet odour of the flower, and say it smells like their mothers. They will reward thee handsomely."

"I hearken unto thy voice. But — "

"What wouldst thou say? Speak!"

"I cannot bear to vex Amne."

"If thou hast any scruples as to Amne's place, canst thou not seek and find one like unto it? The entire hillside to choose from is before thee. There is no need to quarrel about it. And what is to prevent thee going this very day — now?"

It was not always that Fatima's words were as pleas-

ant in Hilwe's ears as on this occasion. But there was an especial reason for the damsel's gladness. It would give her the opportunity to meet Hassan.

"I shall do as thou hast said," she replied. "Thy words are even a command to me."

A strange light burned in her eyes.

"Ay, go," urged Fatima.

"I 'll go this moment."

Quickly Hilwe got ready, and went upon her way. She lost not an instant. It was as if she feared something might occur to detain her.

Soon, and as if with winged feet, she had reached the appointed place of meeting (where more than once they had met), and had told Hassan of Amne's discovery of the narcissus flowers — the white blooms, as she called them, the first of the season, and repeated Fatima's desire that she should procure them.

"I can take thee to a place where they abound," he replied.

"Thou canst? Oh do!" she exclaimed, delightedly.

"They come there the earliest and the finest. There must be many there now. I know the place well. We can take the sheep with us, for there is good pasturage near by; and they can feed in safety, while I help thee to gather the blooms."

The way did not seem long to them, nor tedious. though the sheep were not over quick in their movements. There was always so much pleasure, such enrapt silent joy in being in each other's company, the time fled only too rapidly for the lovers.

"'T is but a little way," Hassan, wily through his love, had said to encourage her. "A few minutes will take us there."

It was one of Nature's gardens, — one of those interludes of loveliness, not uncommon in Palestine, a sheltered hollow in the hills, hiding itself between the outcroppings of the massive gray rocks, which are the bulwarks of the land, and are seen almost everywhere in the "hill country." Yet was it lifted up to heaven, with somewhat of the aspect of an outstretched hand offering its beautiful gifts.

She saw the secluded spot for the first time. Her face was illuminated with the reflected glow. As they stood together on the verge before entering, they turned to one another and smiled, without speaking.

There was a purity, a sanctity, about the place that was entrancing. It looked as if desecrating foot had never profaned it. Multitudes of the narcissus were seen in groups scattered throughout, their silvery-white blossoms gently swaying or softly rising and falling on the palpitating air, as though they were living creatures enjoying themselves, or the immaculate wings of the angelic host spreading for flight.

"I see them! I see them!" Hilwe exclaimed as her eye caught the sight.

A few scarlet anemones sent up their half-expanded buds, *avant-couriers* of the great flaming host which presently should inundate the land — a victorious grand army with their glorious banners; and the crocus, both purple and white, sprinkled the grass everywhere.

Hilwe drew nearer to Hassan — she knew not why.

"Is it not like the garden of God?" he said.

"Yea; it is even Paradise."

"It is Paradise for me where thou art."

"Ah, Hassan!"

"Ah, Hilwe, my beloved!"

They entered, hand in hand, an expression almost of awe in the girl's face.

He saw it, and interpreted it his own way.

"There is no one to see us here," he said, reassuringly. "It is out of the common path, and people do not often pass by; also the rocks conceal it."

"It is a holy place," she murmured with breathless pathos.

As she stood among the narcissus blooms, they appeared like silvery stars or flocks of angels floating around her, as if they belonged to the heaven rather than to the earth. The tall slim asphodels, already sending up their purplish flower-buds from their sheath-like leaves, reached higher than her waist. They touched her brown hands as if in salutation. They were akin to her.

She stooped and kissed them.

"They salaam to thee! Thou thyself art one of them!" he passionately declared. "Thou art even fair and pure as a flower!"

She again stooped and kissed the asphodel to hide her blushes. As she pressed her warm lips to the closed corolla, suddenly the curved petals expanded, opening with a gentle shock.

It was such an incident as appeals peculiarly to an Oriental.

Hassan laughed — a low, soft, sympathetic sound, full of suggestiveness, coming from far down in his throat and chest. She felt as well as heard the mellow sound — the man within him. It thrilled her more than words would have done.

"Thou hast awakened the flower," he said, "that is how thou hast dealt with me. Thou hast awakened me also, and broken the sleep of my heart. I never loved thee as I do now."

She smiled but said nothing. It was as though she was far, far away, and as if she understood him not.

Men are so bold, they have the courage of their feelings — they break loose in their utterance. It is their nature.

But after a short interval she turned to him with parted lips, as though she had been pondering what he had said.

"Nay, rather is it not thou who hast so dealt with me?" she innocently asked.

"Is it so? Sayest thou so? It is well. Thou art right, my beloved." Then, growing warmer, "Fear not to tell me, I love thee better than my own soul. Thou art my flower of flowers, whom no man's hand but mine shall pluck. Thy name is Hilwe — sweet, sweet! and thou art sweet!"

It would be impossible to overestimate the influence of such a man as Hassan over Hilwe. Uniting as he did the nature, the warmth and passion of the Palestine peasant, with many of the thoughts, words, and ways of the more civilised man of the world — the European, teaching him more thoughtful, respectful, and tender

relations and dealings with woman, he surely was possessed of a power that for her was well-nigh irresistible. Besides, he had the further — the more evident potency: in any land, he would have been considered a finely-made and uncommonly handsome and lovable man. And, say what we will, is there any single thing, even in the most refined society, which appeals to human nature as does physical beauty, especially when warmed by the love element? The loftiest intellects have been led captive by it; the strongest minds, the most religious and holiest, as well as the wisest, have become subject to it. However humiliating it may be, it would be useless to attempt to deny this. The facts are too abundant, the proofs too conclusive.

It had come to pass that the moments spent with Hassan in those secret interviews on the Judæan hills, had grown to be not only the happiest and the chief part of Hilwe's life, but her very life itself.

When gathering the brush and sticks for fuel — that constant need in the household for the all-devouring oven and the hearth — she managed to be with him for longer intervals than heretofore; and he, in order to make up for the loss of her time spent with him, would aid her at her task so that her shortcomings would not be noticed.

When caught in some sudden change of weather, such as a cold wind or a shower of rain, he would shelter her under his abai, artlessly saying the garment was large enough for two. They were as simple as children in their enjoyments; and, though eager, warm, and impulsive in their feelings, through their naturalness they were innocent of evil.

And now Hilwe wandered to and fro among the wilderness of flowers, lost in an ecstasy of delight; often lying down beside them to kiss them and inhale their perfume breath; but, so far, not plucking one of them. She felt it would be a species of desecration to mar in the slightest degree the place so consecrated and set apart of the heavenly powers.

Hassan, seeing her peculiar feeling, humoured her in it, knowing that presently she would overcome it. He

drew her aside to a rocky ledge where, in the moisture dripping from the overhanging cliff, a luxuriant bank of moss flourished. Here in the congenial shade, bedded in the thick cushion of sphagnous luxury, grew a number of plants which found in the conditions a grateful habitat. Among them was the grape hyacinth, with its tapering clusters of blossom, finely graduated from the deepest indigo to the richest aquamarine, tipped with vivid powdery azure and a hint of cerulean blue. Also there were many scillas, spires of creamy whiteness, hair-striped with purple so dark it might be mistaken for black. The crevices and crannies of the cliff were crowded with cyclamens, whose flowers, resembling the headdress of some South-sea Island chief, were scarcely more beautiful than the mottled, deep-green leaves backed with crimson. Yet how exquisitely fair were the flowers, pure white or pale rose stained and blotched in the mouth with the richest carmine magenta! Like a purplish fringe, trailed from the rock and swung loosely on the air, the defiant bugloss; and from the topmost height, a flowering almond reached down its slender boughs loaded with wreaths of the tenderest pink. On the ground were numerous patches of the little blue-gray iris, and the sparkling closely-matted silverweed, with a species of golden gorse, whose foliage gave out a musky fragrance, while the aromatic wild thyme formed an outlying phalanx of sweetness and excellence.

Most of those plants are flowers cultivated and prized in the gardens of other countries. The very multitude of them was a glorious sight — they silently sending up their incense to heaven as an oblation, a sweet-smelling offering. It was a passional of Nature — a grand rhapsody of colour, and light, and perfume, and exquisite form. What thought, beyond man's conception, was in a single flower! Each was a thought of God.

No wonder Hilwe, recognising something of this, could not bear to mutilate it — to mar the sacred beauty of this mountain sanctuary.

Hassan, with the utilitarian instincts of a man, at last reminded Hilwe of her errand, and that they had as yet gathered none of the white blooms — the narcissus.

"Let us," he suggested, "pluck only those which are full-blown, leaving the rest for other days; and so we can continue to come while the season lasts."

He was not altogether unselfish in thus quietly planning for the future. But who could blame him?

His idea he forthwith proceeded to carry into execution, in which he was soon joined by Hilwe, whose arms were presently loaded with a great sheaf of the narcissus.

"Thou wilt surprise Fatima," he said. "Thou hast a goodly harvest of them, and wilt get a high price for them in Jerusalem. Not that I care to have thee visit the city. It is full of temptation and evil for such as thou art — unacquainted with the world."

He thereupon launched out into warnings as to the wickedness of the place, and gave her many directions for her conduct while visiting it.

They carried the flowers they had culled to a remote corner of the hollow, where quantities of the narcissus still remained, untouched; and here, in the midst of the white starry blooms, they sat themselves down, and commenced making the sheaf of blossoms into nosegays.

Presently, in abandonment of his feelings, he threw himself upon the ground, in a reclining attitude at her feet, looking up into her face.

Oh, the pure joy of him! It was the gladness that the man has when he comes close to Nature, and feels his heart beat against her heart.

Hassan handed the flowers to Hilwe as she required, and she rapidly arranged them into small bunches or bouquets, neatly fastening each with one or more of the long strap-like leaves of the plant itself.

It was delicious occupation. But it could not last forever. And always the happiest moments are the shortest.

At length the task was done — their work finished. The last bouquet was arranged and tied into shape, and added to the redolent pile which had grown up under Hilwe's hands — a mound of silver and gold of Nature's coinage.

The sun had begun to get low in the heavens. The wind had changed, and sharp little eddying gusts occasionally made themselves felt over the hillside, though not heavy enough to bend the anemones — the children of the wind.

Hilwe gave a slight sympathetic shiver, which Hassan at once noticed.

"Art thou cold?" he asked. "That little breeze felt as if it came all the way from snow-crowned Mount Hermon, and got tired on the journey, stopping here. Or, mayhap, it has kissed the icy peaks of the more northerly Lebanon. Who knows?"

He spread open his abai, according to his wont.

"Here is thy shelter, my beloved. Here is thy refuge and thy rest."

His face shone with a beauty — an attractive power beyond any she heretofore had seen in it.

"What happiness," she thought, "to be loved by such a man. Well may I be proud of him. Well may I love and worship him. There is none like him."

She spoke not the words, but they were written in her face. He saw it. He felt it.

She moved nearer to him. At the same moment he drew closer to her, and enveloped them both in the folds of his ample abai.

"It is large enough for two."

He smilingly and somewhat uncouthly repeated the foolish phrase which he considered so applicable, so clever, and had used so often and so happily. It was as pleasant to them as the words of an old song which are sung in the heart as well as by the lips.

Ignoring custom, the threatening storm of evil — the ominous conditions which overhung them, and even the very existence of Abd-el-nour and Hilwe's uncle, and the blood-feud, they lost themselves in their happiness.

Surrounded by the guardian rocks, the clear pure air, and the sweet-smelling pasture, in this secluded nook, where the narcissus — the sacred Rose of Sharon — abounded, to which lonely spot they had penetrated in search of those immaculate blossoms with silvery-white wings and golden heart, beloved of all, Nazarene as

well as Mohammedan, they forgot the outside world, and lived in themselves alone.

They heard the gentle bleating of the sheep which Hassan, the handsome and stalwart, had driven before him into the further end of this rocky fastness of beauty; and the free carolling of the flocks of birds which flew overhead, with soft whizzing of wings came nearer, and nearer. But these gave them no apprehension of interference. They rather afforded the sense of companionship without fear of intrusion or interruption.

Oh, the joy of it — the preciousness — the soul-gladness of it — to recline among the lilies and asphodels, in this close and blissful communion, and, unmolested, taste the sweet assurances of love!

So far as her presence among those enchantingly lonesome unfrequented retreats was concerned — for this Hilwe had, in some sort, a cover or colour, in that Fatima, her own uncle's wife, who had authority over her, had urged her to seek the flowers. It gave a countenance to the transaction which, in the absence of the foster-mother's permission, it could not have had.

What satisfaction pertains to such little incidents, what a support they afford, and what enormous consequences they are made to father.

Even the harmless well-used abai had its influence. It inspired a security, a confidence, a guardianship — almost a sanctity and a benediction, which otherwise might have been absent. With its folds around them, within its protective envelopment, they were transformed — were new creatures. Its circumference, for the time being, was their mosque — was their world. They were a world to themselves.

To Hilwe, Hassan was an angel of light. And surely she was no less to him.

When one has dealings with an angel of light, what may it not imply?

"Thou art dearer to me than my own flesh. What would I not do for thee! Thou art the delight of my eyes, and my life — my promised spouse. Have I not said thou art rightly named Hilwe, for thou art very

sweet and pleasant to me? My beloved, surely my soul cleaveth unto thee; and all the ways of my being turneth to thee!"

These were the impassioned words with which he addressed her.

But words are not enough. Glances are not enough. What is enough for love?

He held one of the fragrant blossoms between his teeth, and softly and persuasively rubbed it against her lips.

How intently his eyes gazed into hers!

She could scarcely bear it — could scarcely contain the joy of it.

The smile had gone from his face. How serious, almost solemn he looked, with that far-off, absorbed contemplation, consuming imagination, — as if his soul was issuing to mingle with hers, to be one with hers! But he was handsomer than ever. What languishing entreaty was in his expression! She felt his warm breath upon her cheek.

"Dost thou love me, Hilwe?"

Well he knew she loved him; but he wanted to hear her say so.

"I love and I fear thee" — with a sigh. "Dost thou love me, Hassan?"

"Yea. I never loved thee as I do now," he repeated.

Then, in a sudden transport of love triumphant, he drew her to him; his arms were around her; and he kissed her again and again.

Happy damsel, and happy lover. Their cup of bliss was full to overflowing. For them, all the golden carillons — the joy-bells of love, in heaven and on earth, rang, and chimed, and pealed, in tangled sound — in inexpressible harmony of rapture and wonder. And the evening was as the morning. And time had gone astray, and lost the reckoning. For the day had been born again; and all things were new.

Sweeter than ever, with the approach of evening, ascended the perfume of the flowers. The songs of the birds took on a higher, more blessed note, as if they were an angelic epithalamium. The subdued tinkling

of the sheep-bells sounded like an echo of the celestial carols that only ring for bridals made above. And Hassan and Hilwe were the centre of it all.

Lightly the golden moments passed for them. The time for their return had arrived before they knew it. They must go.

Slowly and with a self-consciousness that was a confession, they at last gathered up the flowers, and prepared to depart.

It was like Adam and Eve leaving Eden, after the first sin.

As they left the place — Hilwe laden with the flowers, Hassan driving his sheep, — Hilwe, looking back, burst into tears.

"Why dost thou weep, Hilwe? Am I not as thine own self? Dost thou not love me any more?"

"Love thee, askest thou? Well thou knowest that I love thee."

"Then why weepest thou?"

"I do not know."

"If thou knowest not, it is well."

She hung her head thoughtfully.

"It is because — because it will never again be as it has been. And — and —"

She could say no more. She knew not how to define the conflict of feelings within her.

As for happy yet pensive Hassan, a certain proud assurance had taken possession of him. There was not the least misgiving, regret, or doubt mingled with the reflections with which he regarded the events of the day.

He felt more a man than ever. That was sufficient.

"Have no foreboding, Hilwe," he said. "Think not that I have humbled thee. My love has made thee mine. Thou art now mine own. Thou art even as my wife. Dost thou not know?"

"Yea."

"And not thy uncle, nor Abd-el-nour, nor the sheik, nor aught else can change it."

"Yea."

She believed what he told her, regardless of appearances.

She said no more; but, gathering her head-drapery more closely about her face, followed him as if already he was her lord and master.

"Now art thou mine indeed. I have made thee mine," he declared imperiously.

Our nebulous incandescent central orb — the greater light that rules the day — had already lost his power in the heavens, and was gathering his royal purple and crimson robes around him, his golden crown resting upon his brow — evidently determined and prepared to die like a king — as Hassan and Hilwe reached the point where their ways diverged, and where they must separate.

"Mayest thou be in the keeping of God, Hilwe," he said.

"And thou too," she responded. "May Allah ever protect thee with his merciful goodness."

"Keep up thy courage, Hilwe. Remember what I have said to thee. Naught can divide thee and me."

These were his last words.

With a smile and a sigh she parted from him. The smile was from hope, and was for Hassan. The sigh, for herself, was born of the woman's keener emotional intuition and prescience — unknown to the man. He perceived, as was intended, but the former, and was undisturbed.

She had reached the foot of the tell. The sun kept sinking slowly, his face getting ever more passionately ruddy. How round and rubicund it shone through the violet earth-mist! Down, down he went, a globe of glory, nearer and nearer to the horizon's verge. But as Hilwe with her trophy of flowers rapidly ascended the lofty tell — as she rose higher and higher, it had the apparent effect of staying his descent. It seemed to arrest his decline — to make him stand still in the heavens. It was like a gentle reflection of Joshua's miracle, when, in his fight with the Amorites, he bade the sun stand still upon Gibeon, which is nigh unto this place.

So it was that the sun was yet in sight at Malha, as

Hilwe reached the summit of the tell, and her foot crossed the threshold of her home.

At the same moment, down in the valley, the sun had set; and, in the twilight, Hassan, having cared for his sheep, was saying to himself these words: —

"Surely there is nothing to compare with the love of woman. Not so much the love of the woman for the man, as his love for the woman. It is that which takes him out of himself — which draws the life and the soul out of him."

He was a simple man, and said what he thought.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next morning found Hilwe in Jerusalem, where, with Amne, she soon was busy disposing of the narcissus flowers. The girls had been accompanied by several of the elder women of Malha, each of whom had something for sale. Some of them brought the oak and olive-wood roots grubbed out of the earth — the ordinary fuel of the Holy City; others the water of Ain Kârim and Malha, conveyed in the odd-looking black goat-skins prepared for the purpose, with the skin of the various parts of the body, including the legs and neck, remaining, and, filled with water, standing straight out in grim and mocking similitude to the original living animal, the water being dispensed through an opening in the neck. A few brought vegetables; while two or three had spread upon the ground before them handkerchiefs piled with saffron. But all envied Hilwe and Amne, for whose narcissus blooms there was an instant demand at favourable prices.

They came, as usual, in company; and their train, in indigo-blue robes, and white headdresses, presented a picturesque addition to the various groups of men and women entering or departing through the high portals of the ancient Jaffa Gate, that beautiful morning.

Immediately within, and on the outside as well, the

crowds of buyers and sellers of merchandise formed a dense mass of humanity, among which might be found representatives of from thirty to forty different nationalities, many of them from far distant quarters of the earth, and the greater part of them distinguishable by their dress — each being arrayed in the costume of his country. Particularly noticeable among the surging crowd were the hundreds and thousands of pilgrims and the ecclesiastics on their way to and from the Holy Sepulchre and the various other shrines and sacred places. Towering above all others was the magnificent form of the Greek Patriarch, fully six feet and six inches in stature, and proportioned accordingly. Surrounded by his bishops and archimandrites, returning from the performance of some holy office of his Church, and preceded by cavasses with silver-mounted staves, his Blessedness moved slowly forward, with august mien and unquestionable dignity, wearing a fur-lined robe, his high round hat being covered with a large black veil, reaching below his shoulders. His rich deep voice was like the roll of an organ, and his forceful glance was tempered with geniality and a certain mildness.

So also were in abundant evidence the Jews of different countries, who, while disinctively Hebrew, had each some peculiarity, chiefly in his head-gear, denoting the land he hailed from, and which seemed to reach its climax in the hat of the Polish Jew, trimmed along the brim with projecting bristly fur, and far from becoming.

The colour and variety of the garments of this motley multitude are kaleidoscopic. Yet, so far as the Syrian, Turk, Egyptian, and East Indian are concerned, there is an harmonious blending of tints and shades in the dress, which is decidedly pleasing and shows a feeling for colour. With them rarely is seen a primary colour; secondary and tertiary tones prevail; and a sultry citron, a peculiar grayish blue, a ripened russet, or a soft neutral olive is most frequently found, topped off with a crimson fez or tarboosh, giving the accentuating note to the whole. Where there is a

crude or discordant note in the gamut, it usually proceeds from the Jew.

The native women of Jerusalem are not the least conspicuous members of the motley throng, as, singly or in groups, they surge to and fro, closely veiled — not even their eyes visible, and entirely enveloped in their loose, balloon-like outer robe, generally of white cotton, though sometimes of striped silk. This peculiar garment completely disguises and disfigures the form of its wearer, from head to foot, in this respect resembling the domino.

As the eye glances over this mixed assemblage of Turk, Syrian, Hindoo, Nubian, Russian, Greek, Italian, Briton, Persian, Egyptian, Armenian, Bedawin, Abyssinian, Bulgarian, and all the rest, too numerous to mention, it becomes dazzled and confused, as the ear is perplexed and stunned by the Babel of languages. Laden camels and donkeys, and zaptiehs mounted on horseback, add to the commotion.

Day after day, for many centuries, the sublime castle-like gateway, the principal entrance to the ancient city, has looked down on this remarkable scene. The gate of grayish stone — a marbleised limestone, ripened on the southerly side, by the sun, to a rich yellowish or orange hue, as are all the old buildings in Jerusalem — has set in it, within the high interior archway, an entablature with inscription in ornamental Arabic to the sultan who built the gateway; and this fretwork of fantastic lettering is relieved by a modern ground of aquamarine blue, which, though out of place, is not inharmonious.

Near by, to the westward, on the northeasterly slope of Mount Zion, stands with imposing mien the Fortress of Sultan Suleyman, with the Tower of David, even in its decay an embodiment of stately stalwart strength.

This remarkable pile of buildings, in olden times must have constituted a formidable defence, in connection with the castellated wall surrounding the entire city. The flank, close by the Jaffa Gate, terminates in the grand quadrangular battlemented stronghold already mentioned, known generally, *per se*, as the

Tower of David, the remainder of the fortification, on account of its position, partly hidden by other buildings, not being so impressive from within, though on the outside of the city presenting a noble and picturesque front, on the heights above the Bethlehem road.

This dominant quadrangular tower, sometimes called the Hippicus and Tower of Herod, as well as of David, is unquestionably of great antiquity, and is supposed to be one of the great towers spared by Titus. It, too, is touched on its southerly side to a rich pleasant yellow; for, unlike the suns of other lands, which fade what they look at, the opulent sun of the Orient turns to gold what he kisses. The lower third, including the foundations, is considered to date back to the time of the Jebusites, before David captured the place, and when it was held to be impregnable. The middle third is of ancient Hebrew or Phœnician structure, while the remaining upper portions are Saracenic. The entire is surrounded by a dry moat or foss, which is crossed by a covered wooden bridge, entrance to which is had through a high gateway, to which a flight of broad steps leads up from the street.

The strange, the unique, feature of this ancient tower is one of peculiar interest, though it appears to have but seldom attracted attention: the lower two-thirds are not an inclosed walled space, like an ordinary fort or castle, but are of solid masonry throughout. In fact they are a massive foundation or platform-like substructure for the upper works.

Tradition had long reported that a secret, underground passage, along the line of David street, connected the tower with the Holy Temple; so that in time of danger the enormously valuable treasures of the Sanctuary could be quietly conveyed by the priests to the place of safety afforded by this citadel.

This story had reached the ears of the Turks, who presently took occasion to break into the massive masonry, which had never been penetrated, in search of the vast and priceless hoard supposed to have been deposited there in A.D. 70, when the city was taken by Titus.

In the westerly side of the building, a cavity, made

with laborious effort, is, to this day, evidence of the cupidity and disappointment of the Turks. They found, to their great chagrin, all that part of the tower to be, as above mentioned, of solid stonework, like unto that of the pyramids, traversed only by a few low and narrow air passages, through which a man could with difficulty squeeze. The vessels and shields of gold, the chests of money and coffers of precious stones, which, as in the case of the rifled Tomb of David on Mount Zion, they had hoped to find, were all a myth — a delusion. Their labour had been in vain.

One thing, however, was proved: The great size of the wonderful bevelled stones of the interior; and the character of the work thus disclosed, afforded conclusive evidence of the antiquity of that part of the building. Those peculiar ponderous stones, there could be little question, occupied their original positions — they had never been moved.

One who has justly been accredited with extreme carefulness in statements connected with such a case as this, has said: "Doubtless the shadow of Christ may have fallen upon this tower." It is one of the few places in Jerusalem of which this may be affirmed.

Of course there have been changes. In the many sieges there have been injuries which have been repaired. But these are palpable, comparatively trifling, and at once distinguishable from the ancient, primitive structure.

A much older tradition connects the place with the palace of King David, asserting that it was from this tower the King first beheld Bathsheba, the wife of the noble Hittite, the brave Uriah, when the brilliant but inconstant beauty took her bath. This was she who afterwards became the mother of Solomon.

How sedately and quaintly the old chronicle narrates the circumstance, without blush, or hesitation, or circumlocution; and with that soft echoing chime of an introductory clause, so long and so dearly familiar to the Oriental ear: "And it came to pass." Again, and again, never wearisome, it rings, and ushers in some special narrative or story.

Listen to it:—

"And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and inquired after the woman."

It seems as if it were only yesterday that it had all occurred. And the tower still stands there, an everlasting witness to the wickedness and base treachery of him who occupied the exalted place, and the nobility and grandeur of the comparatively humble Hittite soldier.

The women from Malha, though keeping together as much as possible, had joined other women who, living at nearer places, had come in earlier; all taking their seats on the curbstones at each side of David Street, which at this end is the widest street in Jerusalem, and has somewhat the character of a square, leading up to the Turkish Barracks on Mount Zion.

But few of the stately and handsome women from Bethlehem were found among them. Mostly Christians, and boasting of their Crusader descent, they form a sort of aristocracy among themselves, and have but little in common with their poor Moslem sisters. Their merchandise, too, is chiefly of a different sort, consisting usually of embroidery, the carved shells — the finest of which resemble Mechlin lace — and other mother-of-pearl work, often of commendable artistic merit, in the shape of crosses, chaplets, brooches and pins. They also offer vases, cups and other articles made of the black asphaltic stone from the Dead Sea. All these, of the celebrated Bethlehem work, have a widespread reputation; and the women of the City of the Nativity carry themselves with a proud air, and are distinguished by their peculiar high headdress, of horseshoe shape, covered with white drapery.

From the Moslem village of Silwan or Siloam, covering the cliffs on the opposite side of the Cedron valley, a numerous delegation is present, bringing fruits, herbs and vegetables. These are grown in what is called to

this day the King's Garden, composed of a series of inclosed cultivated fields, at the bottom of the valley, and running up partly on the southerly Jerusalem slopes, which, in places, are planted to the very walls of the city. Doubtless it is what formerly constituted the garden and pleasure-grounds of the kings of Judah; and, according to tradition, probably may have been planned and laid out by King Hezekiah, if not Solomon, the garden-loving king. It is abundantly irrigated by the waters overflowing from the Pool of Siloam, which is just beneath the hill; and the Jerusalem market receives its finest fruits and vegetables from this garden and from those other and greater gardens of Solomon, in the green Valley of Urtâs, below the three vast pools which he built to water them, and which may be seen, at this present time, several miles southwest of Jerusalem, on the road to Hebron.

To-day, within the walls of the Holy City, in the shelter of the streets, there is a moist languid pulse to the air which conveys a feeling of soothing repose, thoroughly consonant with the Oriental temperament. The traffic of the women vendors, in spite of their complicated rivalries, has taken on a more subdued tone than usual, and, with few exceptions, there have been no serious quarrels between them; yet they have not been very successful in disposing of their goods.

Hilwe and Amne had gradually wandered off further down David Street, where a series of steps leads into the sudden descent through the Bazaar, and the way is very narrow, and crowded on each side by numerous small shops and stores. The awnings overhead, sometimes of matting, sometimes of cloth, reach entirely across the street, subduing the light, and adding to the peculiar disconsolate picturesqueness of the place. Here, if possible, the crowd was more dense than ever; and the occasional passage of a loaded camel, as he strode by with tinkling bells and decorated with a great blue bead fastened around his neck, to ward off the influence of the "evil eye," was almost dangerous to life, as there was barely room enough left for the

people to squeeze out of his way on each side, and escape being crushed to death.

"Let us go further on, down by Christian Street," suggested Amne.

"Why should we go there?" asked Hilwe, doubtfully.

"There the pilgrims turn aside to the Holy Sepulchre, where is the shrine of their prophet Issa, and the faithful keep straight on to the Great Mosque, the Haram-es-Sherif. We there shall find plenty of the best customers."

"It is well. I shall do as thou sayest," was the simple answer of Hilwe.

"Then come at once. See the Greek priests and monks! They will buy of us."

Where Christian Street branches eastward out of David Street, at length giving access to the Street of the Palmers and the Via Dolorosa, and finally to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at the junction, and for a short distance, each way, it is arched and built overhead with houses. This darkens and renders more gloomy the already semi-twilight aspect of the place. But there are sheltering angles and recesses beneath the groined roof on which the dwellings are supported. In one of these angles the young girls found a favourable position for themselves and their crate-like baskets containing the narcissus flowers, whose fresh natural fragrance, floating out on the air, was a grateful relief to the close and often musty atmosphere of the contracted dingy shops.

Occasionally, it is true, came whiffs of pungent gales from the mart of the spice-merchants, or the more refreshing aroma from the golden store of the vendors of oranges and lemons from Jaffa. The hinged shutters of those box-like stalls, let down and loaded with great heaps of the luscious fruit, made an attractive display.

Here, too, were gathered the immemorial money-changers — always Jews — with their wire-grated boxes of coin or banknotes, the currency of many lands, from the deteriorated paper ruble of Russia to the lira of

Italy and the golden napoleon of France, or the sovereign of England with the image and superscription of the revered and beloved queen upon it. Thus is the prophecy fulfilled that the gold of the Gentiles shall be given unto them.

The women, absorbed in their dealings, and taken up with their own petty bickerings, gave little heed to the young girls, and scarcely noticed their absence; or, if they thought of them, took for granted they were well occupied in making remunerative sales of their flowers.

Not a few of these peasant women were a pitiful sight, — gaunt, wrinkled and aged before their time, their dark indigo garments clinging in dejected scanty folds about their spare spectral figures. How hard is their lot! No one appeared to have pity on them — none to regard or compassionate. Each customer seemed to want the closest of bargains, wrenching the very life out of those withered beings, till, at last, in a sort of despair of getting their price, or of selling at all, they would abandon the contest, and give up their little pile of wood or bunch of roots, to them like their life-blood, for a despicable Turkish coin — an old-style, depreciated bishlik, with the copper, all too evident, showing through the uncommonly thin wash of silver, or a few insignificant battered piastres, or half-handful of meagre attenuated metaliks, worn sharp by circulation.

Then, when the police passed by, with swords by their sides, always officious and exacting where they need not be, but had better be otherwise, they would hustle and push the poor creatures domineeringly, telling them angrily that they were in the way, and upsetting and scattering their scanty stores.

So it went on, from hour to hour, till the day itself appeared to grow tired of it, and half worn out by it for it was already afternoon.

The women, seldom looking up, but almost ever looking down, began to measure the shadows cast by the buildings, and unwillingly count on the probability of having to carry back to their homes their loads, ove

the weary way they had brought them, only to be conveyed into the city on another occasion.

So they squat on beneath that ancient Tower of David, wrapped in their insufficient garments, the cold heartlessness of their lives become an accepted fact, a permanent condition, which they do not dream of contending with. They do not even murmur at their fate. Its heaviness has lain so long upon them, they seem to know no better.

As if in mockery, it is a gala day or holiday, perhaps the anniversary of the birth of one of the exalted rulers of the earth, for all the consular flags are flying. The information doubtless has been diplomatically conveyed, by the consul in question, to his brother-consuls and the local government: "It is the anniversary of the birth of my august sovereign. The flag will be displayed over the Consulate. There will also be an official reception," etc. Hence the result — this breaking out or burgeoning of flags.

Over the heads of those despised sisters and wives of the land, above the armed battlements, the Turkish banner, the symbol of the Ottoman power, sullenly flaunts its crimson folds, charged with white crescent and star.

Immediately opposite, strange juxtaposition, ripples out gaily, cheerily, bravely, the beautiful flag of liberty — the emblem of the Great Republic across the sea — the fair young gonfalon with silver and red stripes, and that bright constellation of co-equal stars, all of the first magnitude, set in untarnished blue like to the very heaven itself. Lifted high above the American Consulate, on the slopes of Mount Zion, from the tallest flagstaff in Jerusalem, it careers and plunges, like a living creature, in the breezes that blow freshly over the Judæan hills. That mast of pine, brought across the Atlantic, grew and flourished for many a year in one of the vast forests of Maine, one of thousands, bearing its green honours serenely, meekly. But here, away from the land of its birth, it has burst into this glorious blossom of majesty — this flower-of-flowers, whose dazzling petals flash back triumphantly the signals of the sun.

Hail, holy flag! Sanctified with love even to the death, the flag of newer England — of Greater Britain — great because she has conquered herself. No nation can be great till she has conquered herself. England did it, in her Revolution, and before that, and since. For it has to be done again, and again — sometimes continually. And America did it when — when — But we will not talk of that. Are we not all brethren — the children of one mother?

Back of the flag and in the rear of the Consulate, rises aloft, but leaning pensively, almost pathetically, a single palm-tree — a relic — a retrospect and a hope. Type of Israel's lost glory — her only flag to-day! She has no other! Sad reminder of the period when the Mount of Olives and the hills of Jerusalem were sumptuous with palm-trees — so abundant that, in the time of Christ, the multitude of rejoicing people, crying "Hosanna to the Son of David," cut down the branches and strewed them in the way, on his entry, through the Golden Gate, into the city.

There is one nationality that is a part of every nationality. Without a government, it is a part of every government. It has no flag or other insignia of its individuality; scarcely has it a standing or a name. Despised, driven, peeled and persecuted by almost every nation upon earth, it has accepted all this as part of its destiny — as the judgment of God — and gone forward, bearing the heavy burden — believing, yea, knowing that the end with its glorious results will as surely be fulfilled as that the morrow will dawn with the rising of the sun. For, above all the awful judgment-thunder, it hears the voice that spake in the beginning: "Thou art my people, O House of Israel! I will make of thee a great nation. In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

A short distance within the Jaffa Gate, indeed within its shadow, waves the faded pale blue and white ensign of Portugal — one of the older and smaller kingdoms, of enterprise and valour, which boasts of its blue blood, and, in its day, has made its mark upon the world, and need not be ashamed.

While, far down, in the heart of the city, amid the labyrinth of its narrowest streets, hangs, heavily and drowsily, like a half-closed tawny lily, the old blood-red-and-yellow glory of Spain with its emblazoned lions and castles, the damp occasional breeze only reaching it, in its sheltered position, at long intervals, and rarely unfolding and displaying, in full, the wonder of its rich colouring. Radiant and mellow as an illuminated initial from an antique breviary, it stands at the opening of the gray and gloomy street.

Within the house over which it casts its splendour and the magnificence of its illustrious but tarnished past, in the pleasant reception-room, has hung, for many years, a full-length life-size portrait, in oils, of Queen Isabella the Second, representing Her Majesty at her best. Of course, this best must be taken in its one particular physical sense, or with its qualifying grain of salt. The painting shows her as the young queen, and in full dress, and is flattered to the full extent the preservation of the likeness would permit. Poor Isabella! Though pleasant, and even to the present time liked and loved by those she comes in contact with, she ceased to be popular in Spain; and, at length, as every one knows, the proud old land could not contain her. Strange — strange! She was too warm-hearted for the Spaniards! The punctilious, haughty people — the sublimated hidalgos with all their gallantry, could no longer endure the shame of it; and she was obliged to abdicate in favour of her son. He, burning the candle at both ends, and being a man, soon was dead; and so her little infant grandson, Alfonso XIII., sinless king, is monarch of Spain.

Who that has ever seen them fails to remember pleasantly the dear old Spanish consul and his wife? Full of the most genuine etiquette, hallowed by the warmest good-nature, he was the perfect gentleman invariably. There they stand before you, both pining for their native Madrid; and as you express your sympathy under the circumstances, you hear him console himself by saying proudly: "But one cannot be consul of Spain and live in Madrid."

Of the ten foreign consulates at Jerusalem, the three mentioned are the only ones at this time within the walls. All the others, with their proud ensigns, even that bearing the renowned and flamboyant meteor flag of England, gradually have been moved outside, as the city grew and expanded. There soon will be more houses without than within the walls of Jerusalem.

But how far we have wandered from the Tower of David, and the Jaffa Gate, and the poor peasant women! And just now there is an unusual stir at the gate, for the American consul is entering, on his return from the official function, which he has attended in the required state. His dragoman, a distinguished-looking young native with dark languishingly lustrous eyes, and gifted with the knowledge of six different languages, accompanies him; and he is preceded by his cavasses or guards, resplendent objects, in their gold-embroidered jackets, and with enormous much-curved sabres in solid silver scabbards by their sides. They carry, also, long staves, heavily mounted and knobbed in silver, with which, as they advance, they smite the pavement, till it resounds again and again. This is an old custom, observed with dignitaries, to give notice of their approach, and to clear the way.

As they pass through the sublime portal, the Turkish guard posted there presents arms, in recognition of the consul, who makes due acknowledgment of the government salute, by raising his hat.

The old men, seated within the gate, full of the gentle reverence of the East, rise and stand as he passes, to do honour to him; and some of the groups instantly begin to make comments upon him; for this is a people which at once takes the measure of a man. But the remarks are all complimentary.

"He is a good man," said one of the oldest of the natives, venerable with long white flowing beard.

"Yea, a good man and a just, and one that fears God," was the response of a second, who seemed his duplicate, so much alike were they with their steadfast, unflinching eyes and placid countenances.

Either of them might have personated Abraham the Father of the Faithful and the Friend of God.

A third and younger individual acquiesced with some emotion and even heat; and, like his companions, passing the beads of his chaplet with well-drilled fingers:

"Thou speakest truly," he said, with animated gestures. "Verily he makes one love him. He treats us natives like men — the other consuls use us as if we were dogs."

"It were well there were more like him. He deals righteously with us, and gives us wise counsel when we take our troubles to him. Yea, though he need give himself no care about us; for what are we to him that he should weary his soul over us?"

This was uttered by the first speaker, after they had all resumed their seats.

"I would rather go to him than to our own courts."

"Thou mayest well say so. Thou wouldst get justice, without a fee or backsheesh to pay. He would not take a parah from thee."

By this time the consul had reached that part of the walk where the peasant women had crowded and were seated, plying their traffic.

The cavasses, though natives and Moslems, with the pride of place habitual to them, and eager to show their authority, would have pushed the women aside to clear the way for their "chief," as they called him. This they proceeded to do with some roughness, as is only too common in such cases.

"Get out of the way," they shouted. "Why cumber the walk? Do ye not see the Bey?" giving the consul his Turkish title. "Will you hinder him on the way to his own palace?"

But the consul raised his hand, and shook his head, deprecatingly.

"Let them alone," he said. "Do not disturb them. The poor creatures are trying to make a living. It is hard for them at best. Their life is dark and bitter enough already."

The women could hardly understand or believe that he interfered to protect them. The words of kindness

in a strange tongue were to them altogether strange. But they saw the genial glance of the blue eyes, and the restraining motion, and heard the reproving voice; and, perceiving he was their friend, returned to their places.

"Verily he is a kind man," they said to one another. "He would not let the base-minded cavasses ill-treat us."

"Yes; he is a kind man. Yet have I little faith in any man."

This was said by Kadra, who sat near by, and who was one of those who had been disturbed, and so felt provoked.

"He is English."

"No, — American," corrected Kadra.

"That is the same thing."

"Perhaps."

"They are all Nazarenes — Christians."

"Yea; they are all Giaours — Kaffirs — Infidels."

Notwithstanding the numerous distinct races, people in Palestine are usually classed and spoken of by their belief or religion.

"There is Mustafa Effendi," said another of the women, calling attention to him — "a well-favoured man and a brave. He comes this way. He is a good man and benevolent."

"Yea," responded Kadra, "he is a good man and benevolent. But —"

Her mouth went down at the corners with a hideous grimace, the expression of her face implying unspeakable things — untold-of iniquity, inclusive of all the deadly sins.

This is one of the peculiar gestures or actions of the country, and is but too common. That detestable implication is never interrogated. It is much more agreeable to exercise the imagination. No one would be so impolite as to inquire the meaning of that significant "But," which, often standing at the end of a long string of praises, qualifies and nullifies them all, appearing as the sum and substance of everything that is abominable. Accompanied by that almost appalling

gesture, eulogium is more to be dreaded than defamation. No amount of mere words could take the place of that pantomimic slur. Nothing in the entire range of malign epithet could satisfy the meaning it conveys.

"He is a cadi — a judge," added the former speaker.

"Oh yes, a cadi."

This ironically.

The Effendi, a grave, midde-aged unmarried man, with oval face of a sickly yellowish hue (though with nothing else sickly about him except, perhaps, his voice), and having a smooth pleasant manner, flashed his dark eyes upon the group, as he slowly came up, searching for what he wanted. Totally unconscious of the remarks of which he had been the subject, he relaxed sufficiently from his dignity to do business. He spoke in a languid and high-keyed querulous voice; and, after the usual almost indispensable parley and bargaining, purchased the remainder of the stock of one of the women, who, as he was without his servant, raised the basket containing it to her head, and followed him to his house.

The women were not slow to notice it was she who had eulogised him; and more than one censorious remark was the consequence.

At the same time Kadra sold to another customer the last of the eggs she had brought in; and, in consequence, began at once to perceive it was growing late, and was time to leave.

"Where is Hilwe?" she asked excitedly. "I promised to wait for her. But it is long past the hour she said she would be here; and she should not detain me like this. It is a shame! She must have sold her flowers long ago."

"Ah, I 'll warrant she and Amne are amusing themselves visiting the bazaars!"

This was said by one of the younger women who disliked Kadra, with the object of further irritating her.

"That forward Amne is equal to anything," was the provoked retort.

"She will come to an evil end yet," said another of

the Malha neighbours, who, with several others, began to gather together her effects, preparatory to taking her departure.

"It has been a poor day, Kadra," said a frail elderly woman named Nigme. She was a neglected wife of Abd-el-nour.

"Yea; though I managed to sell what little I brought."

"Ah, thou art lucky!"

The speaker had lifted to her head a basket with a few poor roots which she had grubbed out of the ground with her lean hands.

Kadra smiled at the implied compliment.

"Wait a little, Nigme," she said, "and I 'll be with thee. I see Hilwe coming. Here she is."

As Kadra spoke, Hilwe rushed up, breathless.

"Wast thou leaving without me?" she said reproachfully.

"Even so. Thinkest thou I can remain here till darkness covers the land? What has detained thee?"

"I have been waiting and searching for Amne. And — and — I cannot find her."

Hilwe spoke anxiously.

"She 's old enough to take care of herself. We cannot delay for her. Let us go, at once." And Kadra half pushed Hilwe before her.

"Thou hast sold thy flowers, I see," said Kadra, as they followed the other woman, and passed through the Jaffa Gate.

"Yea. See this."

Hilwe exhibited a handful of coins.

"Thou hast done well. That will please Fatima; and she will let thee go and gather the blooms another day; and that will please thee. Ah! do I not know the pride of thine heart?"

A faint passing smile was Hilwe's response.

"I wish that I had found Amne, and that she were with us," she said. "I fear evil has befallen her."

But her companions heeded her not. They had overtaken the other women, and all were talking of the native regiment, raised in the neighbourhood, which

was soon to return and be disbanded, its time of service having expired.

"I shall have my husband back," said one.

"And I the son of my strength," said another.

Thus the wretched creatures boasted.

There is no place so low, so degraded, but pride and envy find entrance there, or even some feeble ray of happiness or hope may reach it.

CHAPTER XIX

BUT where was Amne?

When she and Hilwe had taken their positions under the arched way, at the entrance to Christian Street, the rarity and beauty of the early blossoms heaped high in their open baskets had drawn to them many a passer-by, and not a few customers.

Amne, knowing her flowers were inferior to those of Hilwe, with worldly wisdom had said to her companion, "Let yours remain covered up till mine be sold." But Hilwe could not do this.

The pilgrims on their way to the Holy Sepulchre and the Latin and Greek monks and clergy were liberal purchasers; and the marble shrine covering the supposed tomb of the Crucified, lighted with silver ever-burning lamps, presents from emperors and kings, for the first time that season was adorned with the pure narcissus — the flower to which he had been compared — his own flower — the Rose of Sharon.

They were the blossoms which Hilwe and Hassan had gathered. But let no one despise them on that account. Think of the box of spikenard, very precious, and Mary Magdalene. Were he, the All-merciful, walking the earth to-day, he would not have refused these blooms. And if sinful hands had touched them, be it remembered that, as compared with him, all hands and hearts are unclean and sinful. The dazzling light of the petals, pure as the snow, shone un-

blemished, immaculate, amid the royal and imperial gifts, the fairest of all. And the free natural breath of the flowers ascended up on high, a more acceptable and a sweeter-smelling sacrifice than the perfume-clouds of most costly incense from the censers swung by the handsome dark-eyed and long-haired young acolytes of the Greek Church, who were forever bowing themselves very low, and crossing themselves from right to left, with the left hand, instead of from left to right with the right hand, as do the Latins or Roman Catholics.

"Anything, so as to be different from us," say the Latins contemptuously.

Ah, how much we make our salvation depend on such things! How we still keep paying tithes of the mint, anise and cummin, and omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, — cleansing the outside of the cup and platter, when He said, "My son, give me thine heart!"

And so the Latin and Greek monks and ecclesiastics swept by, and were followed by those of the Syrian, Armenian, Coptic and Abyssinian churches. They wore their peculiar vestments, those of the Oriental churches having high conspicuous headdresses. Each body had a special hour of worship allotted to it in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, so that there might be no conflict. For, as is but too well known, among all these Christian churches the most burning hates and jealousies prevail, and quarrels and fights have occurred from time to time between them, especially between those of the Greek and Latin churches, not seldom ending in bloodshed and even murder. Truly there is no hate like religious hate. It is the hate of the soul; and the conscience of the man is made to stand sponsor for it.

But it is within the great basilica, at its very entrance, that the monstrous reproach exists. Immediately inside the portal, on the left, is a divan-like recess spread with mats, at a considerable height above the floor; and here, seated cross-legged, are two or more Moslems, sheiks of the Mosque of Omar, the official wardens of this Christian sanctuary — this

cathedral of cathedrals, originally built by Constantine the Great, on the discovery of the supposed Cross and Holy Sepulchre by his mother the Empress Helena.

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings with which these sedate Islamites, steeped in fatalistic equanimity, look down upon the successive performances taking place around them, and view the petty jealousies and quarrels of the different sectarians who come here to worship. These sheiks are the guardians of the keys, the custody of which, sad to relate, could not be intrusted to any of those churches. The suave, easy-going fellows, in their loose robes and white-turbaned tarbooshes, seem fully to appreciate the superiority of their position — keeping peace between the Christians — holding the keys of their most holy place, which they open each morning, and close each night. There is a quiet sarcasm in their attitude which is beyond the scope of the fiercest polemic.

A few members of the Anglican Church and of the Protestant churches might be seen within the fane; but these were chiefly travellers who could hardly be classed even with the ordinary pilgrims; for few if any of them permitted either their beliefs or their feelings to carry them even so far as into the borderland of the superstitious. They are lookers-on rather than participators in the ceremonies within the venerable church; and, though not without the profound religious emotions stirred by the occasion, a feeling of sublime pity moved them as they witnessed some of the proceedings. Where they had any sympathy, it was rather with the poor Russian pilgrims of the Greek Church in their abject but evidently sincere prostrations, and who are in outward observances, the most religious as well as the most ignorant and superstitious beings who visit the holy places.

In the midst of all this, Hilwe's flowers were natural and beautiful things, full of all that is acceptable and lovely. How could it be otherwise?

As the Mohammedan hour of prayer — the duhr, or noon-prayer — drew near, the stream of humanity

which swept through David Street, past Hilwe and Amne, had risen to the flood, for it happened to be Friday, the market day, as well as the Moslem holy day or Sabbath, and the merchants and dealers and artisans of that faith had closed their shops, and began to take their way to the Mosque of Omar. The narrow street, in its dusky windings, was like a river swollen to the banks, sending off a branch at Christian Street, which did not seem greatly to relieve the pressure.

There are three Sabbaths every week in Jerusalem. In consequence there is none. Traffic and business go on every day, with no very apparent difference.

Friday is the Mohammedan holy day, and the True Believer closes his place of business for a short time in the forenoon, or at noon, while he visits the mosque for prayer, always performing his ablutions at one of the tanks within the great Temple Enclosure. Returning from prayer, he reopens; and all through the afternoon, is as fully occupied with his trade or traffic as on any other day in the week. Saturday is kept by the Jews only, who desist from all work, in some cases to the most ridiculously minute particulars, on that day. Sunday is observed as usual by the Christians. But from one year's end to another, the ancient city never sees a total cessation of work and business, as there is always sufficient of non-believers in the holy day, whichever it may be, to keep up a volume of activity, and destroy all appearance of Sabbath and of rest.

As the Moslems passed the young girls with their open baskets overflowing with the flowers whose aroma those smooth, self-indulgent sons of Islâm particularly love, they did not fail to stop, and to remind one another of the words of their prophet, and how Mohammed had said: "He that hath two cakes of bread, let him sell one of them, and buy some flowers of the narcissus; for bread is food for the body, but the narcissus is food for the soul."

"Didst thou hear what those pious men say, Hilwe?" asked Amne. "They speak the words of our prophet

(God favour and preserve him!) I doubt not they are out of the most excellent book which he wrote."

"Yea; I heard their words. They are sweet and comfortable."

"I would rather sell one flower to the Faithful than ten to another."

While they spoke, two strangers, a dignitary of the Church of England with his daughter hanging on his arm, drew near. They at once seized the attention of the girls.

"How much he loves her!" said Hilwe.

"And how he lets her cling to him, and what care he takes of her!" added Amne. "Truly those Giaours have strange ways."

"These are asphodels, are they not?" said the daughter, taking up a shaft of the flowers.

"Ah, yes indeed!"

It was the asphodel which Hilwe had kissed into blossoming, and which, out of a tender pity, she had brought with her, placing it on top of her basket. The slender stem with its spear-like leaves was topped with the pale purplish-tinted corollas, but one of which was expanded, the others still remaining partly closed, or only buds.

"How strangely beautiful," said the English girl. "Does it not seem as if there was something mysterious, unearthly about it?"

"Yes," replied her father. "It is indeed so. There is also a golden-yellow species. And some think the name daffodil — another name for narcissus — is derived from the aphodyle or asphodel, which was sacred to Proserpine, and was used in classic times at funeral ceremonies. This is the flower beloved of the gods, and which is said to bloom forever in the fields of heaven."

The canon's face was all aglow with his innocent enthusiasm. That noble eloquent face, it was a perpetual sermon and a litany, and spoke in a universal language the story of peace and love his lips had so often told. For the lineaments had received that spiritual chiselling which left upon them the divine

benediction. His name had gone into all lands — the worthy son of the great Anglican Church.

Presently his daughter heard him murmur:

> "Those holy fields,
> Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
> Which eighteen hundred years ago were nailed,
> For our advantage, on the bitter cross."

Hilwe, knowing scarcely a word they said, still sufficiently understood their admiration. She caught up one of the finest bunches of the narcissus, and held it beside the asphodel.

"But here we have the Rose of Sharon," exclaimed the canon.

"It is precious, indeed," said his daughter, kissing the flowers with a feeling of reverence, as she took them from Hilwe and pressed a piece of silver into her palm.

In turn, Hilwe bent and (oh, how gracefully!) kissed the lady's hand, and then prepared to make change.

"No, no; keep it," said the young English girl. "They are worth far more than that to me, when I think of the dear Lord walking over the ground where they have grown."

She did not know all they were worth to Hilwe — what they had cost her.

Seeing the change had been refused, Hilwe insisted on adding more of the flowers.

"They make one think of the descriptions in the poets — of the celestial meadows filled with these beautiful blossoms, where the souls of the departed blissfully wander," said the canon, with a sigh, and in a dreamy reminiscent undertone.

Why do even the best men always sigh when they speak of Heaven?

The daughter of Britain lingered, greatly interested in her Palestine sisters, fully as much so as they were in her.

"What beautiful young creatures," she said, turning

to her father, "so natural and unspoiled! What glorious eyes they have!"

"I fear, my love, you have not been duly warned of the 'evil eye,' and its potent influence in this land," was his smiling remark.

"No. Nor do I, in the least, fear it. I should like to speak to them — to know more about them."

"Ah, there it is! Perhaps it is already working its spell upon you."

A womanly impulse suddenly seized her. She leaned forward, and gently laid her hand on Hilwe's little weather-browned paw.

"Where did you get your beautiful flowers?" she asked. "Where do you come from? And what is your name?"

She spoke, without thinking that the girls understood scarcely a word she had uttered.

"My dear, they do not understand you," explained her father.

"They come from Malha," said a clear full voice, in English, with a slight foreign accent.

The canon and his daughter turned to see the speaker.

A young man, a zaptieh, who had come up without their observing it, stood close behind them; and he it was who had volunteered the information.

From his uniform they at once saw he was an officer. It may be added that he was a distant relative of a high official, had been educated abroad, and had spent some time in both London and Paris. Indeed, the latter voluptuous city had left her mark upon him most distinctly. Tall and straight-limbed, the dark-blue uniform, turned up with scarlet, enriched with braid, and fitting him to perfection, set off his figure to the greatest advantage. He was on his way to the mosque, and had given his horse, a fine, blooded animal, to his servant, who was leading it away, as it was unpleasant to descend on horseback the steps at this part of the street.

The young officer, standing erect, drawn up to his full height, his left hand lightly resting on his sword-

hilt, presented an uncommonly fine appearance, as he met the gaze of the aristocratic Englishman and his daughter, and saluted them in military style. He excused his interest very neatly, and politely offered to interpret.

Of course, they could only thank him and accept.

They noticed his rather clear complexion, the warm rich color showing through. But they did not know that though his father was a Turco-Syrian, his mother was partly of European blood, and that this high-mettled, well-built zaptieh, in all his becoming military trappings, was the product of one of those peculiar mysteries of the harem which are not infrequent in the dominions of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan.

As for the young officer, there was not the slightest doubt that he was well aware of the attractiveness of his person. But he was far too clever to permit any evidence of this to betray him. The gentle, innocent manner he affected, as if utterly unconsciousness of his good looks, was his greatest fascination.

There are few things which an Oriental values more than to be accepted on an equal footing and received into intimate relations by the Frank or European of distinction or high position. He will do much to bring this about, and seldom permits an opportunity of the kind to escape him. But, if possible, it must come to pass naturally, without the appearance of anxiety or intention — of being sought on his part.

He had heard the English girl's reference to the glorious eyes of the peasant girl, and he remembered that he himself was possessed of as glorious orbs, which he could use far more effectively, and with greater potency, in that he was a man. His blood tingled warmly, and he was feeling at his best, and looking his best, as he knew the gaze of the highborn young lady rested upon him. It was the stimulus he luxuriated in.

Stepping nearer to Hilwe, he commenced interrogating her.

"What is thy name?" he asked, in Arabic. "The lady wishes to know."

"Hilwe."

"And what does that mean?" inquired the fair stranger. "All their names have a meaning, have they not?"

"Yes. Hilwe means 'sweet.'"

"What a pretty name! And, I 'm sure, appropriate."

The gallant aga, or captain of zaptiehs turned and smiled significantly.

"She wants to know your name," he explained, after a low murmur from Hilwe.

"It is Mary — Mary Stanhope."

"Mariam," he translated it in giving it to Hilwe — "Sitti Mariam — Lady Mary. That is the name of the Virgin," he remarked.

Strange to say, the Moslems revere the Blessed Virgin as the mother of the Prophet Jesus, and send tapers to burn at her tomb in Jerusalem, on her festival days.

Hilwe smilingly made reply.

"She says she will remember your name, and bring you more flowers when next she comes."

"Thank her. Do they have to bring them far? It must be weary for them."

On this being conveyed to them, both the Malha girls threw back their heads, and made a peculiar clicking sound with their tongues as they exclaimed "La, la! — No, no!" with a continuation of less intelligible rejoinder.

"They say it is such a pleasure carrying so beautiful a burden, they would not care if the distance were twice as great!"

"How Oriental!" said Miss Stanhope.

"They live at Malha," pursued the captain — "a village on the top of a high tell beyond the Valley of Roses."

Miss Stanhope had drawn her notebook from her pocket, and was making some entries.

"And Hilwe's companion!" she said. "I fear she will feel neglected. I have not learned her name."

The agreeable young zaptieh quickly remedied this.

"Her name is Amne," he said.

"And that means —?"

"Believer."

"And how old are they?"

The question was duly put, and promptly though unsatisfactorily answered.

"They say, 'Allah knows.'"

The most elegant of zaptiehs could scarcely keep his countenance as he conveyed this reply, which is the common one throughout Palestine to any inquiry into age. But he managed to explain that there is a superstitious dislike to giving such information. It is enough for them that God knows their ages.

Besides the strong feeling that it is sacrilegious to pry into such things, there is also probably a dense ignorance and neglect in this direction. It is a land in which statistics of any kind are looked upon with horror — the keeping of them, or inquiring into them as acts of impiety, liable to the calling down of divine wrath.

The feeling, doubtless, is of long standing. Remember the numbering of the people by David, and the pestilence visited in consequence.

Miss Stanhope kept her notebook open, puzzled what to do, and half-inclined to enter the answer the girls had made, recognising it contained, after all, something beautiful and awe-inspiring.

"Allah knows."

Yes; she entered the very words.

"Perhaps I can make out their ages for you," said the zaptieh, anxious to please.

He looked at the girls very steadily, with the critical eye of the Osmanli, skilled in the business, as though noting and counting the marks and especially the beauty points that every year, since they were born, had made upon them.

"They are marriageable," he said, "and cannot be far from sixteen years."

But Miss Stanhope let her original entry stand.

"And my name," he added, "is Kiamil — Perfect. What a name to give a man!"

"I trust you try to live up to it," said the canon, sen-

tentiously, and with the ecclesiastical love of giving advice.

"Oh yes, of course!"

This was said with an expression of eyes and mouth unutterable in words, but startling to the religious mind. Doubtless, in his unbounded self-admiration, the aga considered his handsome body a complete exponent of his name, and a sufficient and standing reply to the Englishman.

"My dear," said the canon, addressing his daughter, "is it not time we were returning to our hotel? I fear we shall be late for luncheon."

Fastening her flowers in her belt, and gathering up her drapery, she prepared to leave, saying good-bye to the girls.

"I am sure," said the canon, taking the captain's hand with the formal regulation politeness of his place and station, "we are greatly indebted to you for your attention and kindness. Thank you very much. Good day."

These words addressed to the well-set-up zaptieh, who had already taken position for an incomparable salute, were faintly echoed by Miss Stanhope. He raised his hand, small and delicate as a lady's, to his fez. Farewell salutes in high style were made on both sides, and they parted.

For a few moments the undaunted self-confident officer stood gazing after the retreating figures of the Anglican ecclesiastic and his charming daughter, and then turned to recompense himself with the damsels from Malha.

He had soon descended to a very different style of conversation with them from that he had conducted for Miss Stanhope. His equivocal, or, rather, to put it less mildly, most questionable, attentions were chiefly addressed to Hilwe, whose beauty had smitten him desperately, but they also included Amne.

The former at first continued to answer his questions with the respect she considered due his position, and with the homage which all women in the East pay to men; but as he went further, her eyes were cast

down, her eyelids lowered, and she was silent. Not so with Amne, who enjoyed the opportunity, and was wayward enough to answer him "according to his folly."

Though the zaptiehs are mounted gendarmes or guards, who have little or nothing to do with municipal affairs, but whose duties extend to the outlying country, including certain of the adjacent towns and villages, he had not hesitated to take advantage of his official rank and the ignorance of the girls to impress them with his authority, and dazzle them with his superb personality. No one can surpass the Osmanli in the seductive arena; and this man's residence in the gay French capital had flavoured and qualified rather than corrected the trait.

The zaptiehs have an ill name; perhaps not undeservedly. It has been said that, of all the Turkish officials, they are the worst, oppressing with the most perfect impartiality both Moslems and Christians. The majority of them have the evil or sensual features that the deeds ascribed to them would imply; yet many of them are handsome finely-formed men; and, almost without exception, they are skilled horsemen with the graceful and confident bearing the manly exercise is apt to develop.

What would have been the outcome of the captain of zaptiehs' insinuating gallantry, had it been left undisturbed, it is impossible to say. In the midst of his most ardent demonstrations, a hand was laid on his shoulder. A brother officer had come up stealthily behind him, in the press of the crowd.

"Ah, Kiamil, I see thou art at thine old business!" he said, in Turkish.

"Even so," returned the other, unabashed.

"Come, come, didst thou not hear the azan — announcement (call to prayer)? The muezzin cried it some time ago. I was detained. We shall be late at the mosque."

The speaker, whose face showed the more repellent Turkish characteristics, including the sinister hooked nose, evidently was one on whom the observances of his religion had still a strong hold, and who had a decided

influence over the man he addressed, though this did not prevent his making a gallant speech to the damsels on his own account. They treated the peasant girls with a familiarity they would not have dared to display towards women of their own class, whom, indeed, they would not be allowed to see.

The voice of the new-comer was an imperative voice, and, coming to Kiamil in the name of the religion, was not to be trifled with. The weaker will gave way, though reluctantly.

As he was carried off by his determined friend, whose wickedly ugly face was a reproach to his fine soldierly figure, the gay captain turned to the girls and said significantly, "I shall return shortly."

The girls watched with wondering, appreciative glances the attractive forms of the two young officers in their fine uniforms, to them beyond ordinary men, as those sons of thunder — rightfully or wrongfully charged with scourging the country — strode off, side by side, down the street of steps, in martial splendour, the rowels of their spurs gingling, their swords clanging on the pavement, their well-drilled legs moving with rhythmic regularity — a glorious vision, dear to the feminine heart, one to admire and love; they watched them with undiminished fascination till the delectable sight vanished, lost in the crowd of less interesting spectacles.

In this, perhaps, the Malha girls were not so very different from their more cultured sisters of other lands.

Across the way, a young man, standing on a block of stone, in order to get the better advantage, had been a close observer of all that had taken place between the zaptiehs and the girls. He waited till the former had disappeared from view, leaving the coast clear. Then he cautiously approached, with a jasmine blossom held between his lips, a not ungraceful custom.

"Look; there is Selim," said Amne, nudging Hilwe. "He is coming here."

It was the wily servitor of Anselmo Jacobini, now attached more closely to his nephew Leone, to whom the old man had relinquished him.

"Who is he? I like not his looks," said Hilwe.

She remembered the warnings of Hassan and was more cautious on that account.

"Nay. He means well. He pays generously, and is a good customer, every one says. But here he is."

"I count myself fortunate," said Selim, "to have come before all the flowers have been sold."

He looked into the baskets, and examined the simply-knotted bunches of the narcissus, which one might call nosegays, but could hardly consider bouquets. He then stooped and whispered something in Amne's ear, his eyes, all the time, being fastened on Hilwe.

"Yes, yes," he replied, in answer to a question from Amne. "Come with me. Bring your flowers. I know one who will buy all you have left, and give you a handsome price."

In reply, Hilwe gathered together some of the best bunches, and offered them to him.

But this did not suit his purpose.

Again he stooped and said something aside to Amne, speaking very earnestly and with emphatic gestures.

"Naam, naam — Yes, yes," she replied, nodding, with a pleased expression.

"And be sure to bring your companion," he added eagerly.

"Hilwe, he says the man of the house will give us at least a medjidie apiece for what we have left. Think of that. And you have n't half as many left as I have."

While they argued as to whether they should go, an old woman from one of the villages drew near, and, with the curiosity of the native, stopped to listen. She had brought in water from Ain Kârim, and the black goat-skin containing it was strapped to her back. She was bending under the burden. But that was nothing new to her. There were families in Jerusalem which she had supplied with the water from St. John's birthplace for many years — since she was a young girl. She had been a hewer of wood and drawer of water all her life. The question was referred to her out of respect and habit.

Selim saw his opportunity to whisper a few words to her, and to drop a small coin into her hand.

"Yea, go with the man," she said plausibly. "He will do what is right; and he offers a generous price."

This was sufficient. Both the girls arose, and, taking their baskets, followed Selim.

He led them through many narrow and crooked by-streets, and up slippery ascents, and under dark and damp archways, — at last, when they began to think the way would never end, emerging at the house of Jacobini.

Hilwe somewhat dazed and bewildered by the confusing incidents which had befallen her, followed the lead of Selim and Amne without much consideration. She at first was gladdened by the thought of disposing of the remainder of her flowers, and at so good a price, and so early in the day. But the tortuous way, and something in the too easy and familiar manner of Selim, as he swaggered before them, the jasmine bloom jauntily held between his lips, he casting, from time to time, a backward leer to see that they followed, awoke her alarm.

Selim did not take them to the main entrance, but stopped at a side door in the adjoining wall, which opened into a small courtyard, in the rear of which was a semi-detached building containing the apartments which Jacobini had sumptuously fitted up for Leone's special use.

A pepper-tree on the right, with its fern-like foliage all of a tremble, partly drooped over the wall, and as Selim drew a key from his pocket, and unlocked and flung open the door, there were revealed a few oleanders, pomegranates and roses in the centre of the plat, and a trellis which was covered with jasmine and a passion-flower. The inclosure was one of those bits of greenery — those pleasant revelations which occasionally, but far too infrequently, burst on the depressed and unexpectant vision in the ancient and mouldering city.

There was an old tradition regarding the house, which mysteriously and with tragic accompaniments related that, many and long years ago, it had been the property of a wealthy Turk, and that the partly disconnected wing, assigned to Leone, had been the seraglio contain-

ing the harem of the true believer. There was more than one indication which would go to confirm this.

Selim, stepping inside, held the door open, and beckoned to the girls to enter. But both of them, looking at one another inquiringly, hesitated and drew back.

"Come in," he said airily. "The good-man of the house is within. He will abundantly reward you for the flowers."

He rolled his eyes languishingly on the girls.

Thus urged, Amne turned to Hilwe.

"Let us go in, Hilwe. Come."

As she spoke, Amne passed inside the door; but Hilwe did not follow.

"Tell her to come," said Selim. "Why does she delay?"

In his agitation and eagerness he twisted the fragrant jasmine between his teeth, and then, taking it in his fingers, unconsciously began pulling the milk-white petals in pieces.

It was one of those made-up blossoms of which the Oriental is so fond, flower being set within flower, repeatedly, till the entire resembles an elongated double or composite bloom. While his dark penetrating eyes were earnestly fixed on Hilwe, he tore the perfumed thing of beauty into shreds.

"Come, Hilwe," begged Amne.

"Come," he repeated, softly adding his solicitation.

But another voice sounded in Hilwe's ears. She heard the warning words of Hassan as they told her of the evil of the city, and that the holy places were the wicked places.

"Entreat me not," she said. "I cannot come."

She stepped back several paces, and, while she did so, implored Amne to accompany her.

This was more than Selim could endure. His delicately polite demeanour vanished. Provoked at being thwarted upon the very threshold of success, he rushed from his place, and caught the reluctant girl by the arm, to compel her to come in. But before he had well taken hold, Hilwe, now thoroughly alarmed, broke away from him and fled.

Away, away she flew, as if she was a bird of the mountain; nor did she wait to think whither her swift feet carried her.

At first he tried to catch her; but, seeing it was useless, and worse than folly where there were so many to interfere, he returned, closed the door, locking it on the inside, and, resuming his bland and fascinating air, ushered Amne into the house.

"She is a fool," he exclaimed, referring to Hilwe. "We now shall see what she has lost through her stupidity."

It was only after she had run through several streets and crooked lanes of many turnings that Hilwe felt secure, and was satisfied she had escaped. When she paused, almost breathless and exhausted, she found herself by a part of the old battlemented southerly wall of the city, wondering how she had come there.

Managing to climb up by some broken steps into an embrasure, where she could rest and look out, she saw, far below her, the Valley of the Cedron winding between the Hill of Evil Counsel and the Mount of Offence, the village of Siloam skirting the lower slopes of the latter, and the Mount of Olives towering high to the left. Far to the right of the dismal fanatic Moslem village, lay isolated the loathed dwellings of the lepers — those accursed unfortunates. Almost completely hidden from sight, in the depth of the gorge, were the King's Gardens, only a few of the trees and nearer inclosures being visible.

Recognising where she was, while she recovered breath, she rearranged in her basket the few bunches of narcissus which had remained unsold, and which had been sadly tossed and tumbled in her flight. She then set out to return to the former position, at the entrance to Christian Street. "It is there," she argued, "Amne will come when she has sold her flowers."

Even could Hilwe have found the way back to Jacobini's house, in search of Amne, she would not have dared to venture near it, after her late experience. But she kept a constant watch for her companion, expecting to see her at every turn. And when she had sold her

last blossom, she made a more definite search; though she found that, in her confusion, she had lost all idea of the location of the house in which Amne had disappeared, or the way they had taken to reach it.

The truth was that Selim, for reasons best known to himself, had brought the two girls by a roundabout way, and through many unnecessary windings.

It was later than Hilwe supposed. Her anxiety had made her forget her promise to Kadra to return without unnecessary delay, and not to wait till the fifth or afternoon call to prayer.

Suddenly rang out the azan of the blind muezzin from the topmost balcony of the nearest minaret, which is an ancient structure fronting on the Via Dolorosa. As he stood and cried his announcement to the four quarters of the earth, from that airy octagonal balcony with its archaic phallic ornamentation in gross evidence at every angle — strange intrusion of the symbol of an older worship — his voice had that plaintive tone so often heard in the utterance of the blind. Each time, in clear musical cadence, sounded the opening words: "Allahu akbar! — God is most great!" while he closed with the invariable "La ilaha illa 'llah! — There is no God but God!" ending with the ascription to Mohammed, in long-drawn finely-accentuated syllables. It is a touching proof of the humanity of the Moslem that the muezzin is so often selected from among the blind, who, alas! are too frequent in the land.

Hilwe knew at once the call was for the prayer at the 'asr, or afternoon, that is about mid-time between noon and nightfall, and, remembering the strict injunction of Kadra, hastened to join her, arriving none too soon, as we have seen.

Once, on the way homeward, Hilwe ventured to interrupt the conversation of the women with the expression of her fears as to Amne; but she was silenced with the reminder that Amne had friends and acquaintances in the city with whom she often stopped, and there was no need to trouble herself about her.

CHAPTER XX

"COME in. This is the way."

As Selim showed Amne through the outer rooms and into the inner apartment of Leone Spollato, great was her astonishment at the beauty and richness of the furnishings. She had never seen anything so fine, and, in her wondering admiration, at first failed to notice the owner of it all, its lord and master, the stately young man who stood amusing himself in a corner with a chameleon — rather a strange pet, it might be thought, for one like him.

The ungainly reptile was a large specimen of its kind, and, including its tail, measured about a foot in length. After its peculiarity, it had adapted its colour to the young count's coat-sleeve, to which it clung, and was now at its very darkest hue — a mixture of black and sooty olive.

Leone was quite absorbed in watching it dart out its cylindrical extensile tongue, several inches in length, when held within sufficient distance of a fly, which it invariably hit and captured, aided by the glutinous moisture covering the expanded end of that most extraordinary organ, so wonderfully adapted to its purpose. The remarkable rapidity with which it used its tongue was in strange contrast to the slow, lethargic character of its other movements, for which it seemed compensative, the length of time it took to lift one of its feet or turn its head being so curiously and methodically sluggish as to be incredible till witnessed.

But the most singular and unexpected action of a creature so apparently inanimate was when Leone, who greatly enjoyed the exhibition, held it towards two smaller-sized chameleons crawling over the lace curtains of the nearest window, to whose whiteness they had duly approximated. Then, the pugnacity of the large chameleon at once aroused, it became hideously enraged, elevated its humped and scaly back, as if to make itself terrific, and, opening its mouth threateningly, hissed like

a snake or angry cat, ready to snap at the first object which presented itself.

"O you terror, how you frighten me!" exclaimed the count, in simulated alarm. He then burst into a laugh.

There was a boyishness, a freshness in the attitude and manner of Leone, as he entered into the enjoyment of this, which displayed his character in a new light. It was as if bygone days, when he was a mere lad, came back and reincarnated him for the time, — as if olden joys and feelings returned and filled him, possessing him, looking through his eyes, moving his limbs, flooding his veins.

Most men have a love for pets, though they may not call them by that name, and though not always able to gratify the propensity. Even sailors, situated as they generally are under circumstances unusually difficult for carrying out the object, manage to make and acquire and keep a great variety of pets, the classification including birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles. Like the love of flowers, it is thought to indicate a kindly spirit. I have known a Prussian sailor, a handsome, neat young fellow, on board a man-of-war, carry for a long time fastened to his person, between his woollen shirt and his skin, one of the smaller monkeys. The two seemed to become a part of each other.

With the sailor, and others similarly situated, this love of pets may be ascribed to the necessity of finding some outlet for the restrained and pent-up affections of another yet kindred nature, which thus find some alleviation. Yet, it may be taken for granted, the boy survives in the man much oftener than is supposed.

"How strange that a creature so lethargic, inert, and dull, should yet be so quick and sagacious in some of its movements, such as in this darting of its tongue, its sudden manifestation of anger, and the skeptical way it turns back on me its eye, so full of Pyrrhonic animus! One eye directed forward, the other backward! What a valuable gift! What an expression, too! See it! And then its capacity for changing the colour of its skin in a few moments. A man could not do the like in a hundred years, if he could live so long."

Leone had heard the footsteps behind him, and addressed the words partly to himself, partly to Selim, supposing the latter had entered the room alone.

"Signor Count," began Selim, to call attention, "see the flowers I have brought you."

"Ah! what have we here?" exclaimed Leone, dropping the chameleon and turning, with an altogether different kind of admiration, apparently to the flowers, but in reality to Amne.

"They are the first of the year, Signor."

"Flowers, indeed; I should think so."

"Is n't she handsome?" asked Selim, aside.

"Yes."

This was uttered brusquely, with an impatient acquiescence, implying the admission was altogether superfluous.

"I told her you would give her a good price for the flowers — perhaps a medjidie — perhaps more than that."

"Certainly. They are well worth it."

"Wilt thou buy them?" Amne asked in Arabic, which Selim translated.

"That I will, fair damsel."

Amne had begun displaying the flowers with a natural grace which was most becoming to her. She smiled softly, though she understood very few of the words spoken, and scarce knew how to reply. But in Palestine gesture is so much a part of conversation that there is, perhaps, no other country where words may be so easily dispensed with in communicating ideas as they may be here. She was not slow to notice the respect and deference paid by Selim to Leone — the possessor of all this grandeur and wealth — the fascinating young lord, upon whom she looked with somewhat of the admiration, awe, and reverence felt for a superior being; and she governed herself accordingly.

On the mention of money, Leone had plunged his hand deep into his pockets in search of purse or change. But all his rummaging was of no avail; he had neither with him.

"Never mind, Signor, I will see to that, and make it

all right," said Selim assuringly. "There is no need to trouble about it. There is no hurry."

Leone had early fallen into the habit of letting Selim act as his steward and purser. His knowledge of the language, and acquaintance with the habits and customs of the people, had naturally brought about this result. And though the craving for authority and position, and the love of display and lavish expenditure, so deeply embedded in the heart of the Syrian, occasionally tempted him to exceed, it was not from any want of affection for his master, to whom he had become attached in no slight degree. Though he loved his money, it might truly be said he loved the master more. In fact, it went so far as that he identified himself with him to an extraordinary extent, taking pleasure in his gratification, and pride in his very person. For the people of Palestine, even in the city, are a warm-hearted people in whom the natural impulses have lost little of the primitive flavour.

"For your honour, sir."

The way in which he would say this, when detected in some piece of extravagance, was altogether indescribable.

It occasionally took all of Leone's determination to check his worshipper in his unbounded and prodigal adoration. And, it must be remembered that none of the expense connected with the worship fell upon this burner of incense, upon whom the glory was reflected. From the golden Turkish pound or napoleon of France, distributed with lavish hand, to the most attenuated metalik, given to the blind beggar, all came out of Leone's funds. But, then, they were constantly replenished from his wealthy uncle's hoard. And who could be very angry with so devoted a follower as Selim? Little did he count the cost where his master's gratification was concerned.

Sometimes Leone would lose his patience about it.

"This is unbearable!" he declared.

There were not wanting those in Jerusalem who told him that people were constantly saying: "Poor young Count Spollato. His dragoman imposes on him; and makes him pay two prices for everything."

This exasperated Leone, and when next Selim got off his stereotyped "Your honour, sir," "My honour, indeed," Leone cried. "With these people my honour is my money. And when you give them a handful of it, you have taken so much of my honour from me, and transferred it to them; and presently they will have all my honour, and I none."

But Selim was incorrigible, and, like the washed sow, went back to his wallowing in the mire.

The curiosity and wonder of Amne in viewing the furniture and appointments of the house were a source of great enjoyment to Leone. Yet, in the midst of all the display, the unsophisticated child of Nature, the daughter of the wilderness, remained, to outward appearance, unabashed, undisturbed. True, an occasional visit to certain acquaintances and friends in Jerusalem had partly prepared her, and given her a slight knowledge of what pertains to a somewhat more civilised mode of life than that of the Palestine fellah.

Once she said, "I must go." But Selim reassured her.

"She would like to see the other rooms — the rest of the house," suggested Selim.

Accustomed to the simple village house with its two or three small rooms at most — oftener only one room — these numerous chambers were to her like a maze. She would have lost her way in them. But, then, this only added the charm of mystery to their other delights.

So they led her from one apartment into another, and even into the more sacred precincts of Leone's bedroom — a marvellous piece of sumptuousness — where her peculiar interest in the most minute details of its equipment she did not attempt to disguise, to the full appreciation of its owner, — Selim liberally, and without expurgation, translating for his benefit her artless, innocently broad remarks, while Leone wickedly smiled to encourage her.

But it was the adjoining marble bath with all its luxurious arrangements and appliances, in the Turkish style, which appealed most decidedly to her susceptibilities. It was here, amid the various toilet articles, her

feminine instincts asserted themselves. She had been like a bird fluttering on the edge of the fountain before wetting foot or wing. Here she gave way. This was the grand climax. She could no longer contain herself. The impulses of coquetry inherent in every female creature, manifested themselves — in the presence of such a temptation were ungovernable, and were let loose.

Few of even the peasant women are unacquainted with the uses of henna with which they stain to a rich golden orange the hands, feet, and finger-nails, or the kohl with which they paint the borders of the eyes a full black. Her fingers were already tinged with the lustrous stain of the former. She, too, had learned, from visiting her city friends, the employment of the cosmetics in more esteemed use. But now, this lavish display at her free disposal was too much. It surpassed her belief. These agreeable mysteries, of voluptuous quality, that held boundless possibilities of beauty, what might not be achieved through them? The perfumed soap, the dentifrice, the cold cream, the gilded flasks of otto of roses, and rarer extracts to her unknown, the violet-scented powder with its dainty box and puff, the ivory-mounted brushes and other utensils, the uses of some of which she could only guess at by intuition, filled her with the intense desire to experiment with them upon her person. She could not resist inquiring about them, or requesting permission to so employ them, and Leone was only too well pleased to gratify her in these wishes.

"May I use this? Can I have that?"

The simple words fell from her lips like the twitter of a bird, or the chatter of a child.

"Certainly. They are at your disposition," he would answer, in the insinuating Eastern style. "They are yours to do what you like with. They are yours, not mine."

No second invitation was needed. She felt as if she had entered some palace of the genii where her wishes might know no limit — where she might gratify her desires to the full.

"How delightfully amusing these natives are!" said Leone, turning to Selim.

"Wait, and you shall see," was his pithy reply.

"And now, Selim, you can go and arrange the flowers in water before they fade. And then serve us something extra fine in the way of refreshments."

Only too glad was the wily Selim to depart on such an errand, which he knew meant a *carte blanche* for a banquet.

"Now I shall do something grand," he said.

Amne stood before the great mirror, half entranced, half ashamed, while beautifying herself, and arranging her hair and dress, Leone leaning back upon the soft abundant cushions of a broad couch, near by, and luxuriating in the scene, to his heart's content.

She watched him furtively, her eyes demurely lowered while he was looking. But when he turned away, removing his enthralling glances for an interval, her entire attention was given to his well-shaped glossy head, which she longed to hold in her lap, and his attractive form, extended with careless abandon, displayed in close-fitting European dress, not concealed by the long-flowing garments of the country, with which custom had rendered her familiar.

"Would that he might love me," she whispered.

Her admiration for him was but too evident; and, regarding him as an exalted god-like being, far above her, this made her feel all the more keenly the necessity for making herself more beautiful, that she might not come short of what was worthy of him.

So she had laved in the perfumed water, and made lavish use of the articles of the toilet, as women are wont to do who have such an object in prospect.

Her plain peasant garb, which hitherto had been sufficient for her adornment, now had become utterly contemptible in her eyes. She could not bear it.

"He will despise me in it," she said impetuously.

Among Leone's collections, which covered a wide field, was a quantity of rich and costly Oriental garments, of both men and women. These filled, in an adjacent room, a large wardrobe which Amne had found

in her ransacking exploration. She had been struck particularly with the magificence of an elaborate silk robe, of rich crimson, lavishly embroidered with gold. The daring thought of appropriating it now flashed through her mind.

"He will not refuse it to me," she said, to encourage her act. "He is so royally munificent."

Cautiously she went to where that most desirable thing of joy and splendour hung. It would fit her to perfection. The sight of it inflamed her. She carefully took it out. She held it against her. Oh, the glory of it! Again and again, she measured her height with it, admiringly. It would make her like a houri.

She tore off and threw aside her peasant dress. It was done in a sort of rage — a passionate disdain.

She, at once, was a modern Eve in her undraped beauty.

In a few moments the gorgeous apparel, all crimson-and-gold, enveloped her. It clung to her as if it was hers of right, as if it belonged to her and loved her. She clasped it about her waist, and fastened its spangled cincture, with graceful freedom drooping loosely over the sheeny folds. She was like a radiant imago — a splendid butterfly, freshly emerged from the unsightly cocoon.

She had found an antique chain of gold, and twisted it about her neck. A similar ornament she twined in her hair.

"He will not refuse them to me," she repeated, to embolden her. "It is only to honour him, and make me nearer to him and more worthy of the intimacy of his sublime presence."

Softly and yearningly, all crimson and gold, with throbbing heart, longing to see him — longing yet fearing that he should see her — she came to the door and looked in.

He still remained where she had left him, half-reclined on the couch, amid the billowy cushions.

There was a giving way to his feelings displayed in his attitude which, being alone, he did not try to conceal, but evidently was careless about. His heart had

grown warm within him, and was dictating certain hopes, wishes and desires, such as are apt to be born of the young man's fancies.

She stood satisfying herself with gazing at him. Perilous work; for in such a case the appetite grows on what it feeds on.

His face had an absorbed blissful expression, different from any she had seen on it. It pleased yet puzzled her. She could gladly have kissed his feet.

He was thinking of her, but she did not know it.

"She is beautiful, beautiful beyond compare," he murmured. "The sylphs of Paradise, whom a man sometimes sees in his dreams, but who vanish at the touch, are no fairer."

She knew not a word of what he said, but the deep round tones of his voice appealed to her strangely, movingly, and she felt through the vibratory communication, all and more than all that the mere words would have conveyed had she heard to understand them.

She saw with devouring eyes, in his retrospective mood, unconscious of her presence, this noble exalted young man, this prince of princes, this effendi, this emir of high lineage, so immeasurably elevated above her, and her heart leaped high, then sank within her. How could she approach him? How could she even let her thoughts incline to him? His face, his head, his hands, his feet, his entire body and soul had for her the high sanctity of the patrician — the noble, the king-man.

"Yet, highly exalted as he is, he has been kind to me," she said. "He has looked favourably upon me."

With proud native grace, concealing her timidity, she drew near. It was Esther approaching Ahasuerus.

Just then with an impatient movement he changed his position, so that the light struck full on his face and figure, revealing his every feature. What a thrill of rapture it gave her. What an attractive force compelled her.

His gaze was directed to the mirror; and he saw, slowly taking form and advancing, as if coming out of it towards him, a rare and lovely maiden, in glorious attire, the realisation of his reverie.

For a moment he could scarcely believe his senses. Then there was the whispering rustle of the silken dress. She stood beside him.

"Amne!" he exclaimed, making a hurried effort to sit upright.

What quickened admiration and delight he conveyed in the single word! It was sweeter than the sweetest music in her ears.

After a slight hesitation, she stretched forth her hand and, ever so delicately, touched his closely-trimmed, pointed beard with the bewitching tips of her tapering fingers, roseate-golden with the tint of the henna, then raised them to her lips and kissed them.

The conciliatory gesture of supplication, the mode of preferring any request of moment, familiar, yet sacredly imperative in the land for thousands of years, it was new to him. But under such circumstances as these, had he witnessed the custom scores of times, for him it would have pulsed with all the pristine warmth and freshness of youth of the day that saw it done for the first time. There could be no staleness about it from such a source.

"Bountiful lord, be not angry with me because I have borrowed from thy goodly store this costly raiment," she pleaded. "It is to do thee honour, gracious Emir, and that I might not shame thy princely state. Grant thy forgiveness if I have offended."

Her touch had sent the obedient blood in saltatory bounds through his veins. He guessed what she meant and said, though to him her action implied more than was intended. He sprang to his feet. He was still full of the delicious glamour of his day-dream, of which this was but a part. Lifted out of himself, it was as if he walked on air. He was happier, more positive, more natural than if he had been himself — his ordinary self. How could he withstand those dark pleading eyes, — those budding lips, red as a pomegranate flower?

"Angry! Offended! Oh, no! Not I! The raiment is yours. It is nothing. Did I not tell you? All that I have is yours. I myself am yours."

What more he said he did not know. His signs and

actions more than satisfactorily supplied his want of words.

"It is well," she murmured, half-inquiringly.

"It is heavenly well," he profanely responded, with the blunt unequivocal assertiveness of the man unrestrained.

Her long black silken lashes reposed with entrancing modesty on the ripened glow of her olive cheek. The rich gleam of that which is life and love shone through, like a lighted lamp within an alabaster vase. Gently, almost submissively, she at length lifted her full-orbed eyes to his, as he gazed with overpowering intenseness upon her. Is it not in this gentle submissiveness, where used with discretion, that the chief power of the woman resides? It was like the sudden meeting of decisive lances in a friendly tournament.

"Allah is kind to me, and thou, generous lord, art kind to me."

"Amne, I love you, I love you! I—"

Pity him. Envy him. And her?

To her he was a great power — a great hope — and more, — he was the embodiment of love.

Except for some stray fragments of Arabic conversation which Leone had already acquired, and a few sentences of Italian and English known to Amne, neither understood the language of the other; and Selim was not near to interpret; nor did they want him near. Eye to eye, lip to lip, heart to heart, there is a language for which, be the lands of their birth ever so far apart, their speech ever so distinctive, man and woman require no interpreter. It is the voice of Nature; it is the cry of love; the universal tongue which has been given to all.

There were in both of them the natural elements that drew each to the other and besought recognition. Perhaps, of the two, the woman felt this the more intensely. Separated as they might be by race, religion, education, training, and position, there still was that, down deep in the heart of each, which remained to claim affinity and association.

The moments swiftly passed; the shadows of ap-

proaching eventide began to fall, filling the room with subdued glimmering. As it happened, it was at the identical time that Hilwe had interrupted the conversation of the women, as they approached Malha in returning from Jerusalem, with the repeated expression of her fears as to Amne.

But Amne had no fears for herself. Nor did she think of returning home. She was past all that.

Through the half-opened windows came occasionally the feeble undertoned warble from a cage of goldfinches hung in the veranda under the trellis of jasmine and passion-flower. A spray of the latter with a single star-like flower, which had broken loose, swung to and fro in the breeze, with a sibilant sound. Within the room there was silence so deep that this soft rustling made itself heard.

More than once Selim had entered the ante-chamber, thinking he might be wanted, and had listened at the door. He did not often enter the inner room without being summoned by his master, or under urgent reasons. So he continued to wait outside.

He had fulfilled his orders to his own satisfaction, and was not without natural pride as to the result.

"It will be a grand banquet, and do credit to the house," he told himself.

He bent his ear to the door.

"She has no intention of leaving," he whispered, a peculiar insinuative gesture accompanying the words. "Not she!"

He ventured to tap lightly on the panels.

There was no answer.

Again he tapped; this time a little louder. Still there was no response.

He now stealthily and noiselessly opened the door, and gently pushed aside the drapery which overhung it on the inside, just sufficient to intrude his head.

He stood and gazed for a space; then slowly dropped the portière and withdrew, a significant smile curling his complacent, sensuous lips.

As in the case of most Orientals, Selim's curiosity was of the inordinate rapacious quality, and where his

master was involved, it was apt to reach the extreme. But he had satisfied himself; and now proceeded to complete the various appointments for the banquet, arraying the table with all the skill of which he was capable, and in ways which he knew were pleasing to the count.

"Now I have done something worthy," he assured himself. "Count Leone will praise me."

The sides of the dining-room as well as the centre of the table were lavishly decorated with the flowers of the narcissus, which he knew would gratify both Leone and Amne; and, with native taste, and that feeling for colour which is predominant in the East, he had laid loosely upon their delicately-veined sides, in open cut-glass dishes of slim oblong shape, some blossoms of the purple crocus, which made a fine and telling contrast with the silver and gold of the narcissus. It was like the rich man, Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen.

As by this time it was almost dusk, Selim lighted the wax tapers in the candelabra, which added largely to the brilliancy of the effect, and announced that all was now ready.

Great was the dazzling blaze of crystal and silver; sweet the relief of the clustering blossoms.

When he ushered Leone and Amne into the room, it would be difficult to describe the delighted wonder of the latter at the sight, as she nodded her head, from which dangled a multitude of golden moons and stars, and other heavenly bodies, by a series of chainlets, from the antique ornament she had fastened in her hair. Especially surprised and strangely pleased was she to find that, instead of her having to serve Leone, standing behind him, and waiting till he had finished eating before she had placed a morsel of the food inside her lips, she was given the seat of honour at his right hand, and made a first feature of, all the dishes being passed to her before he would touch them.

"Will you not eat of this, Amne?"

How gently and winningly he addressed her! With what soft innocent words! And how gallant, and happy, and full of love he was!

"Who could refuse him?" she said. "Who would not worship such a lover?"

He talked to her all the sweet little broken prattle of the Arabic that he knew, and used toward her the tender, endearing, fascinating ways of which he was master; encouraging her to reply in her unsophisticated village phraseology.

It was remarkable with what tact she filled her place at the table. There were few or no blunders perceptible on her part.

The knives and forks were, no doubt, somewhat of stumbling-blocks to her; and, like the Eastern people generally, she considered that food tasted sweeter from between the fingers; yet she was too shrewd to let this appear, but watched and copied Leone in everything.

Still she could not forbear to put choice bits of the food into his mouth with her fingers — oh, how daintily!

"It is delightful to be so intimate with you," she said; "I love you so."

And he returned the compliment in kind, after her example, and with the addition of an ardent kiss.

She even did not show surprise at the forbidden fizzing sparkling draught of amber hue which Selim poured into the slender glasses placed for her and Leone's use, and which exhilarating fluid of France she mistook for the most delicious sherbet she had ever tasted.

Noticing its peculiar effervescence, in her heart she supposed it contained some potent love-philtre. But she did not care.

"So much the better," she said, tossing off the potion; "I cannot love him enough."

And Leone drank her health; and, with replenished glasses, initiated her into what she accepted as a sacred ceremonial libation, teaching her to drink his health.

He luxuriated in talking to her at her level.

"What a dear little bead!" he said.

It was one of those blue beads (suspended from her

neck) so commonly worn by the peasantry as a talisman to ward off the influence of the "evil eye."

He bent forward, and taking it between his finger and thumb, raised it to his lips and kissed it.

"I love it so, because it is yours," he lisped.

"It is nothing," she returned, smiling.

"It is everything."

He replaced it, softly and slowly, where it rested, above her breast. His hand lingered there tenderly, caressingly. And still flowed on the deliciously foolish babble of love-words: —

"O delight of my eyes, joy of my life, do we not love one another?"

"Truly, truly."

"That is a beautiful star tattooed upon thy bosom, Amne. Let me touch it with my lips."

Quickly appreciating the change in position which had taken place between herself and Selim, Amne followed Leone's example in ordering him about. She even went further, exacting very particular service from him in innumerable ways, clapping her hands to call him, and making him feel her superiority in acts only possible to an Oriental. It was perfectly characteristic of the people.

Leone laughed, much diverted. Selim showed no restiveness, but took it all in good part, treating her as a capricious child. He had a greater joy.

And when the night settled down and darkness reigned supreme, and the fowls of the air had gone to roost and the beasts of the field to their lairs and man to his repose, and Amne evinced no anxiety or fear as to remaining, Selim quietly repeated to himself with scarcely-suppressed exultation:

"He is pleased. I am glad. She is well content to stay. Why should it not be so? She has no thought of leaving."

And the moon came and looked down on the ruinous places, and on savage and desolate regions where no man dwelt, and on homes of beauty and love; on thievish haunts and murderous dens, and cradled innocence; on seraglios, and holy shrines; on peaceful

sanctity, and hotbed of lust; and left on each alike her chaste cold kiss. For to her all was well upon the earth.

And that day and night passed, and were followed by others like unto them. And Amne was content to live the new life she had found with Leone, and to forget the place of her birth, and the house of her people, and the old life at Malha. Nor did it trouble her, nor enter her head to think she had made herself accurst with a dog of a Giaour.

He was kind to her according to what such men count kindness, — far kinder than would have been one of her own religion or people.

In her estimation he was as an incarnation of all that was to be desired.

O man! — the beast! — the angel! — the god! What art thou? And where is thy reckoning?

The old man, Jacobini, living close by, — almost under the same roof, — came and went, in his placid existence, knowing none of these things. Or, if a stray suspicion entered his mind, he averted or closed his eyes, thinking it better not to see. What could he do? He recalled, too, the proverb he had once heard quoted by Selim: "Why should a man set fire to his own beard?"

CHAPTER XXI

EVEN as Kadra had prognosticated, Fatima was so rejoiced at the amount of money obtained by the sale of Hilwe's flowers, that she was eager the girl should go, the very next day, in search of more of the spoil of the field and hillside. Only too gladly did Hilwe set out the following morning, and found the expectant Hassan awaiting her, and eager to accompany her and assist her in her task, as he had done previously.

If possible, the natural garden-like inclosure was

more beautiful than ever. The flowers were more abundant, and of greater variety. The two days of genial weather which had intervened had made a remarkable difference. The entire hillside would soon be ablaze with scarlet anemones. In favourable spots it was already dabbled with them, as if with blood-stains. But, oh, the silvery white of the narcissus! And the joy, greater than ever, it was to Hassan and Hilwe to sit among the blossoms and inhale the fragrance! They found it easier than before to gather the flowers, and soon had all they desired.

Certes, their happiness was at the full. And how glad and free were Hassan's words!

"Out here alone, Hilwe, away from every one, among the sweet white and scarlet blooms, is it not like Paradise? Is it not Heaven on earth, with thee in my arms, — so close to me, — so dear to me, my beloved?"

"Naam — Yes."

Hassan heard the softly-uttered response breathed very low against his breast with a sigh of deep contentment, as Hilwe nestled nearer to him, under the sheltering folds of his abai.

"How spice-like is the smell of the blossoms! This is even the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense of which Suleyman, the wise king, spake in his Canticles — his Song of Songs. And thou, my beloved, my spouse, — for art thou not my spouse? — fairest among women, art among the daughters as is the lily among thorns. Truly, I am sick of love. And thou alone canst comfort me. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

"Yes, truly, I am thine."

What could be more simple or innocent than their love-life?

Whatever else he was, or was not, Hassan was a brave, stalwart lover. He was deeply affectionate as well as lovable. It came natural to him. He could not help it. And now, at this time of the year, when the earth and all things were so kind and generous in responding to the genial influences that abounded, and

the quickening ardour of the great central orb, it was not for such as he to play the coward or the laggard. It was not in his muscle or in his bones, in his heart or his hands. He, the strong one, who had lived so closely to nature, and who had wrestled with, or made playfellows and playthings of the wild creatures on the mountains and in the valleys, and had learned their untutored ways, intuitively knew what was expected of him, and was not dwarfed to the cold, calculating, conventional standard of artificial life.

With the sweet music of the voice of the woman he loved ringing in his ears, — so soothing and low, so loving yet so modest, — what wonder that his heart was stirred in no ordinary degree!

Love is its own excuse. There is no apologising for it. Is there anything sweeter in life? No — no! It is, as Hassan repeatedly had said, Heaven on earth.

She had met him in the hills, under the shadow of the rocks, in the fields, in the cave where he slept and found shelter. Men have warm hearts in the Orient, and, living a rude pastoral life, are not ashamed of the natural endowments — rather, indeed, are they proud of them. They have not learned the shame that comes of progress of a certain kind.

No one brings accusation against the wild, unlicensed creatures of God for acts of immorality or immodesty. With man, of whom, rationally, more is expected, it is otherwise. Yet, often, the natural emotions reduce a man to the bare original principles.

In short, Hassan's love for Hilwe had all the impetuous ardour of the healthy robust peasant. Full of the strong instincts of the man who has lived the free, outdoor life of the mountain-side, and with comparatively little or no conception of the restraints and limits the conventionalities of a refined civilisation necessarily have erected around all that is connected with love and marriage, it obviously would be unfair to judge him by any of the artificial standards of modern society. They could not take his measure. He was too large for their strait-laced mould. He lived more in his feelings and emotions than in his

thoughts and reason; and even his reason was dragged down into his feelings. And in this respect he was no exception to his class.

Still, it may be said he did not conform to the rules and customs of the primitive people to whom he belonged.

True. But this was not altogether his fault. He had done what in him lay to reach this end, and gain their approval; and even yet hoped to obtain the desired sanction. Exceptional circumstances had prevented and thwarted him. Otherwise there would have been no room for this criticism.

In the sight of God and the angels, Hassan and Hilwe were man and wife. What mattered it that neither Hilwe's uncle nor the sheik at Malha, nor the sheik at Bettîr had sanctioned the contract and muttered the formula over them? What matter what the functionary, civil or religious, or otherwise, had said or done, or not said or done, about it? or that, for venal motives, Hilwe's guardian had withheld consent? Too often the sacred words consecrate unholy partnerships and the most wicked compacts; and sometimes they are wanting in the case of the genuine marriages, — unions made in Heaven. Besides, with the fellaheen, a written or even a verbal contract is all that is absolutely required in marriage.

It was their honeymoon, — the feast of their married joy. But for them no wedding banquet was spread, nor were there rejoicing and merry-making of kinsfolk and friends, fatted calf, and golden ring, and marriage garment, nor all the little forms and ceremonies so dear to the native heart. Even the most maimed rites were wanting. Yet sweeter than the metheglin prescribed by old Teutonic custom for bride and bridegroom during the bridal month, — known from this as the honey-month or honeymoon, — were to them the salutations of the flowers, and the "God speed!" of the fresh breezes blowing up from the Great Sea over the waiting expectant hills. And within, they were glad with a secret gladness and a fearful joy.

It was the time of year when the land may be seen

in all its beauty; and Palestine seemed to put on its glory to rejoice with them. Throughout rugged Judæa, and fairer still in the land of Ephraim, whose lines had fallen in pleasant places, on the richly-gardened slopes, named Paradises, the freshly-expanded young leaves of the pomegranate bushes had that delicate orange-pink hue peculiar to them when first they appear. It is neither pink nor orange, but smiles among the soft green foliage of the early year with a cheerful, fulvous glow, brightly beautiful as any blossom, lighting up those grand slopes. They saw, day by day, the hillsides and valleys, love-flooded, flame out redder and redder, warmer and warmer, with the scarlet of the anemone, till they seemed to have caught fire from heaven, and all was universal conflagration, that, later, smouldered on in the more sullen crimson of the ranunculus, or the adonis, whose sanguine flowers among their fringe of tender green the Christians have pathetically named "The blood-drops of Christ." The spurs of the mountains were clothed as in a blue mist with multitudes of lupine; and the little celandine, beloved of the swallow, lined the margins of the cool streams with its golden cups.

And the days and the weeks passed, and to the man and the woman, in their Eden of bliss, all was as a dream, and the blazonry and pageant of the flowery landscape symbols of the love that each felt at heart, growing fonder and fonder, stronger and deeper.

How much dream or dreaminess enters into the Palestine life and character, — the people, the places, even the dress! The traveller or the stranger lends himself to the impression, and he feels as if he were walking in a vision of the past, and that by some stroke of the magician's wand which had created it, it all should suddenly dissolve into impalpable air.

It is the Bible alive!

Yet if it is the land of three thousand years ago, it is also the land of to-morrow, of procrastination. Perhaps this is the explanation of it all.

"Boukra, Boukra! — To-morrow, to-morrow!"

Boukra! This is the word continually on the lips of the people, — the constant reply when the question is put why this or that thing has been so long neglected, and has not been done, or when they are pushed to finish the work given them. They are eminently content to wait rather than to labour.

"Boukra — To-morrow." Yes, it is the land of Boukra, where every one has plenty of time in which to do nothing. There is no rasping hurry here; all is bathed in the congenial almost torpid quiescence — the repose pertaining to it, and into which it has settled with fatalistic equanimity. The thing most dreaded is any disturbance of existing habits and customs.

But, so far as the visionary was concerned, with Hassan and Hilwe it rather was that the dream, the hope of their life, had been realised, and that their happiness, through their love, had exceeded expectation and the wildest imagination they ever had indulged in. It had come upon them almost unawares. That it had been chastened and proved by the peculiar opposing circumstances they had encountered, had not lessened but really heightened the ultimate satisfaction and felicity which were theirs in spite of all antagonism. It is a well-understood principle of human nature that that which costs comparatively little is valued accordingly.

Hassan was not the sort of man to have any such thought as that the shell or body which he inhabited, or that of the beautiful Hilwe, or the rocks, flowers, grass, trees, and living things surrounding him were, as taught by the idealist, mere appearances, abstractions, creations of the brain, delusions. Oh, no! He was not built that way. To him they were very real, substantial existences. There was no insipidity about him, — no molluscous flabbiness. He loved the world, and the things that were in the world; and, so far as in him lay, it was his determination to get all the good out of them he possibly could extract.

By this time, according to men's ways, he may have been wicked; he was, at least, as frail or self-indulgent as are a majority of the natives; but he never

sinned as badly as David sinned; and I never called Hassan "a man after God's own heart."

But had the bright calendar of those days of the year as it unfolded itself in flower, and bird, and insect, in sky, rivulet and grove, for Hassan and Hilwe no undertone of melancholy, no touch of subdued, sombre colouring?

That could not be answered positively from outward observation. We only know that where man is, there must be sadness — that even his highest bliss is tempered with it. And we doubt that they were exceptions. It indeed would be strange were they able, except, perhaps, in their most exalted moments of happiness, to shut out from themselves all thought of the inimical conditions which, however courageously they had pushed aside and held off from them, still environed them.

Yet, whatever questioning or inauspicious thoughts may have intruded upon their gladness, they gave them no utterance during those days of light. It was a point of honour as well as of love with them. They would not say aught that might seem to bring reproach.

It was not till the harvest of the roses that Hilwe at last gave way, and broke silence as to what was reverberating, a minor tone, in her mind.

She had stolen away, one evening, to meet Hassan at the old trysting-place. She was late, and found him waiting, and impatient at the delay. There was a boisterousness in his manner towards her which something told her was forced, unnatural, and meant to conceal or counteract his true feelings. She resented this inwardly, while she gave way to his mood, and apparently took no notice of it.

Her hair had fallen loose on her shoulders, and was blown in dark tangles about her face, while her garments, in which she had been working all day, were more or less bedraggled and disordered. She had hastened at unusual speed, in her effort to make up for being late; and she thus explained and excused her dishevelled condition, which she tried to set right as

best she could. But Hassan only laughed, and told her, humourously, he found no fault with her.

"Why should I?" he asked flippantly. "The face of a beloved mistress has no need of a tire-woman," he added, quoting an old proverb.

She wished he spoke more candidly and seriously. Now, she felt, he is speaking away from the subject at heart; and tears filled her eyes.

Noticing this, he rallied her about it.

"Why art thou so woe-begone and dejected?" he asked.

"Hassan, it is the time of roses," she said, with great feeling.

"I know it," he replied carelessly.

He would not understand her.

He was very proud and sensitive about this, and could not bear interrogatory upon it, even from the woman he loved. It had been a sorer mortification to him than he himself had quite measured, that he had been foiled in reaching the end he had sought, and that he had not yet found the hoped-for deliverance for her. It was a reproach to him; yet he did not care to acknowledge it.

The words of Abd-el-nour spoken to her uncle had been burned in upon Hassan's brain too deeply not, at once, to be recalled by even a far slighter hint than that of Hilwe's.

"The rose-harvest began three days ago; and to-morrow will be the greatest day of all, when most of the flowers will be in bloom."

How plaintively she spoke of the joyous, the beautiful event!

"And all Malha is rejoicing," he said, with a contemptuous backward toss of his head.

"All but Hilwe."

This was uttered by her in a low sad voice, scarcely audible.

Hassan's face had assumed a hard, drawn expression, and his eyes were full of pain as he looked beyond Hilwe into the far distance.

"Roses and rejoicing," he muttered, as though he had heard her not.

She lifted her eyes deprecatingly to his face, but she could not catch his averted glance.

"And soon it will be barley-harvest."

"Yea. And what of that?" he said.

"Oh, Hassan! And hast thou forgotten the words of Abd-el-nour to my uncle Ismael?"

He roused himself with an effort, and drew himself into a more erect posture.

"Nay. That could not well be. Didst thou think I could forget?" Then, as though he were recalling and repeating some unpleasant lesson, he went on in a monotonous key: "He said the crop of roses would be abundant, the barley-harvest early and good, and, counting what the lentils, wheat, olives, grapes, and all would bring him, together with what he already had saved, that, by the time the doura was ripe and garnered, he would have the full amount he had promised for thee. Have I forgotten aught of that thou didst tell me?"

"Verily and indeed thou hast remembered every word."

A strange awe filled her at his rigid manner.

"Oh, Hilwe, little dost thou know how, night and day, those words have been before me! How I have broken my heart against them!"

"Forgive me for speaking about it, and if I have wronged thee."

"Didst thou think I took it too easily? Or didst thou imagine I was beginning to forget? Too heavy would the reproach be for that. If I have leaped like a wolf into the fold, if I have broken through like a thief in the night, was there no excuse for me? And even then, did I take aught that was not mine own, or was not freely given me? Or did I offend against custom till Nature cried within me and I could not help myself; or till I had tried every other means I could think of, without avail? I brought peace-offerings, and spake pleasant words to thy kinsfolk. And my daysman — never man spake sweeter words or more movingly than did Chalîl. But they put their ears to sleep. They would not listen. They were as the deaf adder that will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. They re-

warded me evil for good. They drove us forth with curses and violence. They spilt my blood."

"It is true! It is true!"

Hilwe's head dropped on her breast for shame.

"The evil that they would do unto me, mayhap it will fall upon their own heads; for they had no pity. As for me, I have not offended against my nature. But if I have committed wickedness in this that I have done — though I cannot think that I have — then let me be judged. But let me be judged by Allah."

As Hassan, drawn up to his full height, his hand slightly raised heavenward, solemnly and impressively spoke these words, it might well be thought next to impossible for any one beholding him and gazing in his handsome face to pronounce him guilty of any deadly sin or malign act. The entire attitude of the man repelled the idea.

"Thou art innocent — innocent and spotless as the daylight!" was all Hilwe could say in an agony of remorse.

"If thou hast thought me hard to thee, Hilwe, and I may have been hard at times, it was not through unkindness, it was because of my love, and that my thoughts were troubled on account of thee, so that I was jealous, and I steeled myself to face what might be coming, and to guard thee from evil."

"O Hassan, I have done wrong and misjudged thee!" she moaned. "But I never would have spoken were it not that I feared the worst at the hands of my kinsfolk. I know not what they may do, they are so cruel. Ever since Amne's disappearance they have looked with suspicion upon me and shown me no favours, but acted bitterly towards me, threatening and oppressing me. My life may be in danger. The people of Malha are exasperated, and ready for any mischief. They with Amne's folk questioned me closely, and took me before the sheik, thinking I had concealed the truth; but I could only repeat what I had told thee. How could I know more than that? Yet they do not believe. Thou knowest how I have suffered about Amne. And now the sheik is wroth, and he has forbidden even the old women

to carry water into Jerusalem. Doubtless thou hast heard, for it has made much talk and trouble."

"Yea, I have heard, and that he charges the old women with taking backsheesh to betray the young girls. It looks bad. But as for thy people putting thy life in danger — I cannot believe that."

Then, as if to draw Hilwe's mind from the graver subject, Hassan continued to speak of the water:

"They say the people of Jerusalem complained to the pasha of the sheik withholding the water, but received no satisfaction," he said. "It is a good thing for the people of Ain Kârim. The water there will now be in greater demand than ever; and also the sheiks of the Mosque of Omar will reap goodly profit from the water of the 'Great Sea,' as they call it, and the other vast cisterns under the pavement of the sacred inclosure. So it comes to pass that the misfortunes of some are for the benefit of others."

"It seems with us as if one trouble followed upon another."

"It is even so. I have watched and waited, hoping for deliverance. I have wasted the night hours trying to think out and find some opportunity which would work to our advantage. But in vain. I have feared harm to thee did I take some open and decided step before the time had come. Again I thought, while I am contriving who knows what Allah hath determined in our behalf?"

"It may be as thou sayest," she replied. "Doubtless thou art right."

"Hast thou never heard of what happened with Azrael and Suleyman?"

"Nay; how should I hear it, unless thou didst tell it me."

"Then hearken," said Hassan: "Azrael, the angel of death, in an assumed visible shape, once passing by Suleyman, and looking steadily at a man who was sitting with the king, the man asked who it was. Whereupon Suleyman informed him that it was the angel of death. 'He seems to want me,' said the man, alarmed. 'I beseech thee, therefore, order the wind to carry me from

hence into India.' This accordingly was done, for Suleyman, the wisest of men, was skilled exceedingly in magic and enchantment. Then Azrael, turning to Suleyman, said: 'I looked so earnestly at the man out of wonder; because I was commanded to take his soul in India, and found him with thee in Palestine.' Thus may it not be so with us? — instead of bettering matters, may we not make them worse by meddling with them? Have we not had experience of this?"

"The story is a profitable one," said Hilwe. "I shall take it to heart."

"It is a good while yet till the doura harvest," Hassan resumed. "By that time I would have laid up sufficient to make no unworthy present to thy uncle; and then, when all was told, when he knew all, he would give his consent, and Abd-el-nour would yield, at last — would be obliged to give thee up."

"And there are the people of Bettîr," she said. "They would have to be pacified."

"True. But that is comparatively as nothing — an easy task. I do not trouble myself with it. Between Chalîl and the sheik, his father, I hope to make the way smooth and peaceable."

"Pray Allah it may be so."

Then Hassan's eyes brightened. The happy, boyish look returned to them while he softly smiled.

"Did I not point out to thee from afar the habitation of my father and of my mother in Bettîr? It is my inheritance, and will now be our dwelling-place — mine and thine, even as it has been theirs. Shall we not be happy there, Hilwe?"

"Surely, surely. Be it according to thy word!"

"It is a pleasant place," he continued, with the easy transition to the agreeable and acceptance of the optimistic natural to the Oriental. "Pomegranates and figs to thy hand. Grapes, apricots, melons, almonds, peaches, and the golden quince and purple mulberry more than you can gather; besides vegetables of every kind that can be mentioned. There are not such gardens in all Palestine."

"Ah, yes!"

Hilwe's heart was swelling with suppressed emotion, and this was all she could say.

"Then the flocks and the herds, the honey dripping from the honey-comb, the olive groves and the fields of grain," he continued. "Well may it be called a land of corn, wine and oil, and flowing with milk and honey. And the water springing out of the solid rock! Ah, that is something to boast of! Not as at Malha, where thou hast to go far to draw it, but close to thy very door; — and then it is living water, fountains of water, cool and sweet."

What a gentle, loving, genial fellow he was, and how full of life! Carried away with his recital, he swayed his body to and fro, and he laughed fondly, and bent his knees, from time to time, suddenly springing them back, quite as effectively as, and much more naturally than any of the young bloods of our most exclusive set, after their manner, when, under similar impulses, yielding themselves to the fascinations of some pleasant story.

Man is man, however he may be garbed, to whatever race he belongs, in whatsoever station he may be found; he cannot conceal his sex; and his nature will reveal and declare itself, often unconsciously, and spite of circumstances.

"Would to Allah it were accomplished!"

Passionate tears dimmed Hilwe's charmed gaze as she spoke. She adored him more than ever as she looked upon him, so handsome, so strong, so kind, and cared for nothing but his love.

"It will all come in good time, Hilwe. Do not be disquieted or cast down. Two hearts united can remove a mountain, they say. Nor needest thou think thou shalt be lonely at Bettîr," he added, misunderstanding her tears, and with the obtuseness of man when dealing with woman's keener sensibilities. "Thou soon wilt get familiar with the women of the village. Moreover, when thy housework is done, thou canst follow me to the field or the pasture, and we shall be together, and I shall help thee, as before, to prepare and gather the fuel."

The reaction caused by the happy pictures Hassan

had presented, were too much for Hilwe's feelings. The tears ran down her cheeks, and she broke into a fit of sobbing.

"I cannot help it," she said in a choking voice.

"There, there; weep not. Bismillah — in the name of God, let me comfort thee. Let me wipe the tears from thine eyes."

Catching up the drapery of her headdress he wiped away her tears, then taking her in his arms, he tenderly embraced her, kissing her again and again.

"Is not a lover more kind than a father?" he asked. "Am I not better to thee than ten husbands? Do I not love thee more and better than any one else could? Let not thy heart fail thee. Be of good cheer. All will yet be well. And yet, in days of sweet quiet and repose, we shall sit beneath our own vine and fig-tree."

CHAPTER XXII

BY this time the soft primrose-coloured radiance which flooded all the horizon behind Malha and the hills to the westward began to fail and fade. The sunset, that at its high tide had swept over the banks of day, was reluctantly ebbing. But though the shades of evening were fast approaching, Hassan and Hilwe still lingered, loath to part.

Suddenly on the clear, still air rang out the clang of a horse's hoofs, sounding nearer and nearer as they smote in rapid succession upon the rocky roadway. Hassan and Hilwe arose, and, peering into the distance, made out the figure of a single horseman. He swung forward at a furious gait, in the rhapsody of delight of a skilled equestrian, and would soon be near at hand. He seemed to come flying on the wings of the wind, out of the sunset; and the cloud of dust surrounding him was like a golden mist or halo.

As he came up, he of necessity slackened speed, for the road was very rough and broken at that place.

Catching sight of Hilwe, he at once drew rein, and made the customary salutation.

"Whom have we here?" he cried.

Then, with the perfection of ease, flinging himself from his Arab mare, he made pretence to tighten the saddle-girth, as an excuse for his halt. And as he did so, most attractive he looked, in his dark-blue uniform turned up with red.

Hilwe immediately recognised him as the young aga or captain of zaptiehs whom Amne and she had met in Jerusalem, and who, with that peculiar mingling of badinage and egotism, offensive to the stately religious conception, had given his name as Kiamil or "Perfect" to the daughter of the English ecclesiastic.

The gay captain was now in all his glory, and in the full exaltation and bravery of his equipment, which probably no one could appreciate more than he could. He estimated, without doubt, at its full value, the effect produced on the ordinary mind by his fine figure arrayed in his military trappings and accoutrements.

Slipping the bridle over his arm, with a word of encouragement to his blooded gray mare, he left the road, and, sword by side, with measured step, approached the spot where Hilwe stood.

"Ah, I perceive thou art the fair damsel whom I met in Jerusalem with the flowers!"

He paused, trying to recall her name. Meanwhile he had fastened the mare to a thorn-bush.

Hilwe did not attempt to reply, but, yielding to the feminine weakness, kept her eyes fixed on the superb specimen of the genus homo, magnificent in his closely-fitting uniform, the glittering buttons and gold braid having their usual effect and completing the result. Yet, withal, she was alarmed.

"Amne? — No, Hilwe! Thou perceivest I remember thee. I returned that day, as I promised; but could not find thee. Thou hadst left."

He now stood opposite to her, and so close that she felt his hot breath on her cheek; and, abashed, she stepped back a few paces.

"There is no need thou shouldst be afraid, most

comely of damsels. I shall not do thee harm. That be far from me. Am I so very frightful to her I love?"

As he spoke, he smilingly followed her, which brought him face to face with Hassan, who, filled with inarticulate rage, had thrust himself between.

"And who art thou?" asked the baffled aga, who now for the first time perceived Hassan, he having hitherto been partly hidden in the shadow of the rock under which he stood, and the gaze of the young zaptieh having been so thoroughly concentrated upon the fair Hilwe as to have left him but little sight for aught else.

"I might rather ask who thou art; and why thou breakest in upon us to molest us," was the natural but impolitic reply.

Hassan was beside himself with jealous anger, and forgot the respect mingled with dread which the peasant almost invariably has for the zaptiehs and bashi-bazouks, — arrogant, dangerous people, whom he would not venture to treat insolently. The nizâm, or regular military forces, excite no such fear or detestation as do those marauding, rapacious irregulars.

From the moment the young officer appeared in Hassan's sight, not a single movement of his well-trained and handsomely-fashioned limbs escaped the notice of the young shepherd, to whom each and every one of those elegant postures was an unspeakable torture and insult. His brain was afire. His heart was sore. The erect centaur-like display — horse and rider seemingly one, the carelessly-easy dismounting, the studied leaning pose in tightening the girth, the debonair manner and fascinating stride in approaching Hilwe with sweet words — oh, the insupportableness of it all! It was maddening — detestable! The more handsome the captain looked, the more Hassan hated him. That well-kept pampered body was at once a reproach and menace. His entire presence was an affront.

The first impulse of the zaptieh was to resent Hassan's attitude and words, so contrary to the usually submissive spirit of the fellaheen in the presence of their oppressive tyrants. But the young officer had, on

occasion, the useful gift of being cautious. Doubtless it was of selfish origin. This made him hesitate ; while it suddenly flashed through his mind that this fellah would not have dared to take the stand he did, had he not some of his people near at hand to support him.

" Who knows what those rocks conceal ? There may be a band of his followers with their guns, ready to pick me off, this evening in this lonely place; and no one would ever get at the bottom of it. Or they might knock out my brains, and, sending my horse loose, to find her way home, when my body was discovered, make it appear I had been killed by a fall from her."

This rapid reasoning had a decidedly sobering effect upon Kiamil Aga, especially when taken into consideration with the resolve, which was really uppermost in his mind: " I shall not fail to pay him off for this, another time."

So the discreet and dissolute captain smoothed his ruffled feathers, while he moderated his speech. Of course, he knew the game was up. His fire was quenched.

" Mayhap the woman is thy wife? Thou wilt bear me witness that I did not know," was his conciliatory rejoinder.

" Though she were my wife, what is that to thee? "

" Forsooth, everything. Were there no such tie betwixt ye, might I not avail myself of it to share the right to admire her? Desire is no fault in the young; or, at least, it is pardonable."

" Thou very well knowest that such an one as thou art doth not mate with such as we are."

" And why not? "

" Because there are bounds between, which cannot be passed ; or, if passed, not without danger."

Hassan ceased, both the speakers steadily gazing in each other's face.

As the zaptieh caught the clear penetrating glance of those wonderful hazel eyes of the young shepherd, he was, on the instant, strangely moved. Something of Nature stirred within him. It was that sign, that token

of kinship which makes us all brethren, whether we acknowledge it or not.

From the first, Hassan had held out his hand, repelling and warding off the zaptieh. The latter now, with fitful impulse, seized it, and held it in his own.

"There," he said, "let us not quarrel about it. I meant thee no wrong. We are both young men, and should understand one another. Whatever a man does who is afflicted with love, he is to be excused for it, they say."

He then quoted an old proverb of the country, more apt than nice.

It was impossible for Hassan to resist such condescension and overture, reinforced with the accepted wisdom of the land in the shape of that coarse old proverb. Those so-called "perfumed words" or "musk-words," such as had been used by the aga, but which we are excused from giving, are generally the occasion of establishing good-humour between men, breaking up reserve, and seeming to place them on an equal footing. The handsome giant yielded. How could he do otherwise?

"Verily, it is not for me to gainsay thy words," he said. "Why should I not accept them in peace?"

It was done. The trouble was over, at least for the present, to all outward appearance.

Many of these turbulent dissensions in the East are like a summer squall, rising suddenly without much premonition, raging furiously while they last, but passing, after a few moments' violence and threatening of imminent destruction, leaving the sky clearer than before.

It was now growing dusk. There was no time to linger, with such rough riding before one. The zaptieh suddenly remembered that he had appointed a rendezvous with his men at the Convent of the Holy Cross, where they might gather, so as to enter Jerusalem together in martial array, — a point gratifying to his vanity, and which he always, where possible, insisted on. They must long have been awaiting his coming.

He turned and unfastening his horse, led it into the

road. Twisting his fingers in the flowing mane, he lightly vaulted into his seat with the *aplomb* of the expert horseman that he was, without waiting for Hassan, who came up offering to hold the stirrup.

Once mounted, Kiamil felt an immediate exaltation — an access of his confidence, his courage and superiority. Again their relative positions were defined. He was the proud Kiamil Aga once more; Hassan the despised fellah. It rankled in his breast to think that this miserable peasant had thwarted him — had got the better of him. He, the Osmanli, the zaptieh, the aga, to be humbled, — and that in a love-affair, — and by a fellah! He could not forget it. It touched him where he felt the keenest — where the sensitiveness of such a man as he was chiefly resided. Looking down at him from his lofty position, he muttered, under his breath, the words:

"When the snake's hour of death comes, he goes upon the highway."

Hassan heard not the words, but he saw the look, and he remembered it.

The aga had commenced to ride off, when something seemed to occur to him. It was with him even as the Orientals say: "If a bad man would repent and reform, his lust will not permit him." He returned to where he had left the young shepherd standing and looking after him.

"What is thy name?" he asked.

"Hassan."

"And the village where thou dwellest?"

"Bettîr."

"H'm. It is well."

The next moment the aga struck spurs into his horse, and the noble animal, responding to the unnecessary pressure, sprang forward with grandly-lengthened stride into the evening shadows.

The aga's legs clasped tightly her heated swelling sides in order to keep his seat. His blood boiled. He gave loose to his depravity, and unpent himself. A torrent of lava-like words burst from his lips. Again and again he sent the cruel rowels upward, till they entered the flesh

of the beautiful creature. It seemed, in some sort, a gratification of the fierce passion that raged in him to do this, and to feel her rise and plunge beneath him at their touch — she who would have obeyed with pleasure his slightest word.

The blood stained her dappled skin that glistened like velvet. Her sweat mingled with it. The breath of her nostrils was as smoke. Her muscles and veins stood out like cords. She was driven to the utmost. But still her slender tapering legs went out with regular rhythmic motion, sure and certain, as if she flew over the ground without touching it.

"I am on fire of Sheol," he said. "And to think that miserable dog should come between me and my pleasure! I ought to have killed him."

He cursed and swore, drunk and maddened with the rage of his disappointment.

"They may say what they like," he said, "but love is the same with desire; or, if it is not, I know nothing about it."

He took no thought, in his wild riot, of the hollows and broken places in the way. Many a time his brains would have been dashed out, had it not been for his mare's sure-footedness, preserved under such trying odds.

Her intently staring eyes, piercing the darkness, saw what he could not see.

"Poor fellow," she thought, "he does not perceive; he cannot know. But I can see and know for him. I am his good genius, and like his wife."

She believed in him; she loved him — that was the beautiful part of it — and often had she risked her life for him.

He, too, loved her, and, in general, did not abuse her. But now the besottedly bestial appetite in him stirred him to his unholy depths, and made him unworthy of her and of the image he bore.

Still he drove the spurs into her with the sensual fury of a satyr.

"It is a case of life and death," she thought. "I must carry him swiftly and surely. He rides for his

life. It is in jeopardy. Everything depends on me. But I shall save him."

When they came toward the end of the valley, to the place where the torrents of centuries of "rainy-seasons" had washed away every particle of soil, and left the entire road-bed a mass of huge cobble-stones interspersed with boulders, she knew they must hold up, and go slowly, or be dashed to pieces. Even in the daylight no living creature of her kind could pass unhurt through that horrible experience without the greatest care. It was now pitch dark. Cautiously the sagacious animal steered her way; not without many a slip; but she always recovered herself, and saved herself from the worst, never so entirely losing her footing as not to be able to regain it. On reaching the end of the dangerous defile, she gave a snort of relief and satisfaction, and prepared to ascend the slope.

"It went hard with me; but I am over the worst," she thought.

Turning a bend in the road, they saw a light. It proceeded from a fire which his men had made, for the comfort of it, to keep off the chill of the evening air, and also as a guide for their captain, so that he might the easier find the place in the darkness.

At a few paces farther, there loomed up before them, magnified by the broad effect of the massed shadows and the reflected firelight, the huge bulk of the Convent of the Holy Cross.

It resembled a mediæval stronghold rather than a peaceful monastic institution, and, like many another religious building in Palestine, has the appearance of having been built to resist a siege — defence against violent entrance being a necessary precaution in the days in which they were erected. Around it, and especially in the rear of the convent, where the clay soil, the accumulated washing of the hills, is red, and rich to fatness, rise up, terrace above terrace, abundant and well-kept olive-groves. These and other fruit-trees caught the light on their plumy branches, showing like burning bushes against the blackness of the night.

Within the pile of buildings is the chapel, which, tra-

dition says, covers the spot where grew the accursed tree from which the cross was made upon which Christ was crucified. The place belongs to the Greek Church, and has long been held in pious veneration; and upon the walls and pillars of the chapel, with its rude and broken pavement, are depicted, in fresco, the figures, hideously gaunt, of many a saint and holy man, the most of them being evidently reduced to the last stages of mythical ascetic emaciation — indeed seeming to be almost walking skeletons, pitiable to behold even in effigy.

But their brethren of to-day afford no such evidences of austerity. It is far otherwise with them, — though, on this occasion they keep quite invisible, close within their walls, not venturing to show themselves to the zaptiehs, those irreverent and dangerous fellows. Door and gate are securely locked and barred, while the long-haired monks, in their high hats and black sweeping robes, keep watch from their lofty windows.

The men had gathered around the fire, joking and laughing, and, in the absence of the aga, addressing each other as "Aga," after their wont; and not scrupling to speculate in decidedly ribald terms as to what adventure had detained their captain.

But when he rode up among them, all this was soon changed. A glance at his face told them he was in no mood to be trifled with. Each man sought his horse where he had picketed it, and silently prepared to mount. After a short pause and a few words of inquiry, he gave the word of command, and with more or less promptness all of them were in their saddles.

It was astonishing to see the action of the Arab mare from the moment that she came up, and found herself with the rest of the troop. Grievously taxed as she had been all day, especially severe as had been her handling in the last miles of the journey, her pride asserted itself, and, though almost worn out and ready to drop, she tossed her head and arched her neck, blowing the foam from her nostrils, switching her tail, pawing the ground and curvetting, as if she was not the least tired, but was ready and fresh for another run.

Her aristocratic blood was stirred. It was as if she said:

"It would never do to let those inferior-bred things — those scrubs — see me blown and used up. I would rather die first."

That was how the high-spirited creature felt. It deceived her master. It would have deceived any one.

"How many thousands of ants, beetles, flies and grubs I have crushed to death under my hoofs during this ride!" she thought. "Who knows or cares anything about them? They were made to be stepped on. What is their life to us? What is life, anyway? Who knows? I only know that I am a blooded mare of the desert. That is enough to know. I am of importance."

It was the philosophy of Louis XIV. in a horse.

She had one other trial to endure before the day was ended, and that was the climb up the heights in front of the convent. The summit formed the dividing ridge, separating the waters that emptied into the Mediterranean from those which emptied by way of the Gihon and Cedron valleys into the Dead Sea. Here the road, if such it may be called, went up the face of the rocky precipice, steps being cut into the steep acclivity, so that it resembled a rough and bulging staircase strewn with stones and boulders.

The aga, from necessity, gave the mare her head, laying the bridle on her neck. The darkness rendered the ascent doubly dangerous. But the sure-footed mare carried the aga safely through, though several of his men came to grief, some receiving bad falls before reaching the top.

After this horror, the road, though still bad, seemed comparatively easy.

Ahead, they soon began to see, at intervals, the lights of Jerusalem dimly gleaming in the distance. They were approaching the abrupt descent into the Gihon Valley.

As they passed the tall windmill on the left, a prominent landmark, Kiamil Aga called one of his troopers to his side, entering into conversation with him in a low tone. He was the young man of about his own age named Assad, whom we have already met, and who,

having proved useful to him on more than one occasion, when involved in difficulties, had become a favourite of his in consequence. Through the influence of Kiamil, Assad had been promoted; and now they were more than ever together.

"Assad," presently said the Aga, "dost thou know a fellah of the name of Hassan?"

"How should I know the man thou meanest, Aga?"

Assad accompanied his reply with the usual suggestive click of the tongue and backward movement of the head, conveying the impossibility of his possessing the desired information.

"But hearken, Assad. It is important. I am anxious to know, and I am sure thou canst tell me."

"How can that be?"

"Now, hold thy peace, while I show thee — till I describe him whom I mean. He is a young man; his name is Hassan, as I have told thee; and he dwells at Bettîr. He is tall, uncommonly tall and large, and well-built. If I mistake not, he is a shepherd. Thou hast been much in that part of the country of late. Thou shouldst know him."

"Verily, Aga, thou speakest truth. I know him well."

"Now, what canst thou tell me of him?"

"He is a man of Bettîr, young and well-favoured, and has kept the accounts for the sheik. And, again thou art right, Aga, he keeps sheep."

"Is he married?"

"No more than thou art, or than I am, Aga."

"What dost thou mean?"

"Surely, that should be known to thee, Aga."

Assad laughed low and deep. It was the mellow chuckle of a man who can afford to be familiar with his superior, and who feels he has said something good or telling, and enjoys what he has said.

"Nay, speak plainly. We want no parables. Is he married?"

"He is not married."

"There!"

"Though that, doubtless, has been no hindrance to him."

"And is that all thou canst tell me of him? Hast thou had no trouble with him? Have the taxes been paid on the land and trees, the sheep and cattle? Has he resisted or evaded? Or hast thou aught to complain of him?"

"Nay, forsooth, I have no more against him than against others."

"Thou hast evil to complain of him, then."

"For that matter, all are in one condition. All are naked in one bath, as they say. They are all alike. One is as bad as another. They are quick to resist and evade, if possible. It is their nature. They hide their flocks and herds in caves when they learn we are coming. Even, as thou knowest, some of the more obstinate of them have cut down their olive-trees rather than have to pay the tax. The people of Bettîr are not worse than those of other villages on this side. They who give us the worst trouble are in the country beyond — the men of Hebron. They are possessed of Shaitân; they are full of the very devil."

"Assad, I asked thee for testimony against this man Hassan; and lo, thou speakest in his favour. Yet hast thou said enough to convict him. What though others are as bad as he is, that does not excuse his evil-doing. And I am determined to make an example of some of those people. Why should it not be he? He deserves it for his insolence to me this day."

The compliant Assad at once perceived what was expected of him.

"Excuse me, Aga; I did not understand. Doubtless it is as thou sayest. He is worthy of punishment. It can be proved."

"Now thou speakest sensibly, and after mine own heart. I tell thee, the dog's death approaches when he defiles the mosque; and when the hour of the game is come, it runs in the way of the hunter."

They had now crossed the Gihon into the main road, by way of the ancient aqueduct, which carries the water from Solomon's pools into the Temple Enclosure; and the entire troop of zaptiehs, falling into order, pushed on more briskly as they ascended the west flank of

Zion's Hill, the battlements of Jerusalem with the frowning citadel, spectral-like in the semi-darkness, rising high above them on the right, a few scattered olive-trees relieving the severity of the slopes.

As they drew near the Jaffa Gate, Kiamil Aga, who had kept the useful Assad beside him, turned to him confidentially, speaking in so low a voice no one else heard.

They smiled significantly, each into the other's face. They were fitting associates. Assad nodded his head acquiescently; and Kiamil added:

"Come to my quarters to-night. I would speak with thee further about this matter."

"I am at thy disposition, Aga."

"Thou knowest the old proverb: 'I have only one heart and many desires; to which of them shall I give that heart?'"

Assad laughed.

"Right well do I know it."

As the aga turned aside he muttered.

"Desire is the same as love. Or if it is not, it is much to be blamed."

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN Kiamil Aga, the smooth and vain captain of zaptiehs, in all the glory of his martial trappings, had departed, after his short but animated interview with Hassan and Hilwe, near Malha, he left behind him a disturbed and unhappy condition in the relations of the lovers, due to his advent on the scene. His was a malign influence.

It was impossible for a man like Hassan, with his sensitiveness on the subject, to overlook the undue familiarity with Hilwe of the sultry-souled aga, and especially, his knowledge of her, and his reference to their having met previously in Jerusalem.

The latter was the more damaging circumstance, as it had so happened that in all that had been said con-

nected with Amne's disappearance, Hilwe had made no mention of Kiamil Aga's presence. She had considered it as a subordinate incident of the unfortunate affair, or as being not actually related to it. But now all that poor Hilwe could say in explanation failed to disabuse Hassan's mind of the disagreeable impression it had received.

"There is neither patience in the heart of a lover nor water in a sieve," says the Eastern proverb.

He broke out into violent language, upbraiding her, using Amne's fall as an ensample, a case in point, and reminding her of the advice and warning he had given her. He could not contain himself.

He had used words considered inadmissible in that land — words, once spoken, not easily recalled. They parted in anger.

"Truly, love is the cause of a thousand suspicions; and jealousy is the rage of a man," murmured Hilwe, in the suffering she had to endure in secret.

Hassan's heart was sore within him. He had spoken unadvisedly with his lips, but his stubborn will and rampant heat would not permit him to confess it. He longed with an unutterable longing for Hilwe. But his pride had him in strong possession, and would not let him give way. He would not take back what he had said.

During the last days of the rose harvest, he lingered about the neighbouring hills, from where he could see her in the distance. He haunted the place. He could not help it, though despising himself for it.

He tried to persuade himself that he was in the right, — that his anger towards her was just; thus, only adding to his distress and pain.

Even the rejoicings of the Malhaites over the unusual earliness of the rose harvest and the abundance and fineness of the flowers, were offensive to him; and it stung him to the quick that Hilwe should participate, though he knew well she had no choice in the matter, but must be there to do her share in the work. Yet such is the unreasonableness of a man whose heart is gnawed by jealousy, and who does not know how to get what he wants, and have his own way.

Despite his angry feelings that would not let him see it, it was a rarely lovely sight — that wide sweep of freshly-opened blossoms. The great piles of the crimson flowers grew pyramidally larger as, in the cool of the early morn, the maidens emptied the fragrant contents of their baskets on them, amid the vines, and under the shade of the olive-trees.

The men helped, or acted as guards. And as they worked and gathered the blooms, they all sang together a quaint old song of the place, in praise of the rose. They called it "The Chaunt of the Rose."

The air in its primitive setting had, in its monotonous motive, abrupt rhythm and crude simplicity, a strange resemblance to the Wedding Song in Wagner's "Lohengrin." The words caught from this fantastic melody a magic perfume and a fine rare colour like a reflected rosy glow.

THE CHAUNT OF THE ROSE.

Fair is the rose,
Born out of heaven;
No other flower
Is like unto her.
See how she sits,
High on her throne,
Serenely august,
The Queen of the World.
Smile of the morn,
Light of the dusk,
Long hath she worn,
Warm in her breast,
The last blush of the sun
As he sinketh to rest,
Kissing the one
He loveth the best.
Sweeter than musk,
Or spikenard most rare,
Or cassia from far,
Is the breath of her lips.
The branch of the rose,
Wherever it grows —
Wherever it blows,
Is always a rose —
Is always a rose.

The song was meant (perhaps only in a blind, incoherent, half-felt way) to typify the blooming of the flower. At first, there was no semblance of rhyme; then dawned a faint hint of it; after, came imperfect rhyme, then the perfect form, finally bursting into the luxuriant, lavish, superabundant display of it — the full-blown rose.

The last verses formed the refrain, and they were invariably carolled more loudly, and by all the combined voices, with evident gusto, and much clapping of hands and posturising.

The strains floated up to Hassan, softened and sweetened by the distance. How pleasant and gladsome they had once been in his ears; but now he heard them with a pang. They brought him many memories; for it is the habit of the people of Palestine to sing at their work. Even labourers in excavating, and carrying off the rubbish in their collapsable straw baskets, or masons in building a house or a wall, have their own peculiar songs, more or less archaic and quaint, which they sing or troll, to aid them in their work, in a way often more like intoning than singing.

Others of these lyrical efforts are Laments. These may, some of them, in their original form, be as old as the times of Saul and Jonathan, a fragment of whose elegy, with that grand refrain: "How are the mighty fallen!" written by David, is found in the Second Book of Samuel; the entire, entitled "The Bow," being contained in the lost Book of Jasher, not likely now to be recovered.

With what hungry eyes Hassan watched the women of Malha, in hopes of catching a stray glimpse of Hilwe. The figures of the men and women, clapping their hands, as they passed in and out among the grape-vines and rose-bushes, the olive-trees and pomegranates, made an animated and attractive picture. The tall hawthorn-trees lining the roadsides were sheeted with creamy-white blossom, in fine contrast to the carmine of the Provence and damask roses, the rich warm scent of which, graciously saturating the air, ascended to mingle with the cool fragrance of the hawthorn.

Whiffs of perfumed breezes were wafted to the disconsolate young man, who, eating his own heart, did not let himself enjoy them or anything else, he was so miserable. He saw Hilwe's uncle Ismail and the hateful Abd-el-nour exultantly gathering in the spoils of the harvest, and was wroth.

Kadra, with her usual penetration, had noticed Hilwe's dejection, and surmised the cause. She also had seen something of Hassan's actions, which confirmed her suspicions. A few adroit questions drew the secret of the jealous trouble from Hilwe.

"Kadra, I am sick to death about it."

Then Kadra overflowed with advice. Of course, she offered her mediation.

"When we get the last of these roses into Jerusalem, I shall find opportunity to see him," she said. "He loves thee, or he would not be jealous of thee. Did he not love thee, he would not mind such a matter as that."

They had to be most careful in their conversation, that they might not be overheard. Abd-el-nour and Hilwe's uncle were constantly present, in the grounds. But as they came and went, watching the handling of the roses, Kadra managed to convey to Hilwe many a word of encouragement.

It was strange how the old village gossip had taken up the cause of these two young people, and how it had enlisted her sympathies, and, to some extent, changed her character, or rather called forth the best that was in her.

"But, for that matter, why not go to him thyself?" she said to Hilwe. "He is a comely and brave man, and he loves thee. Why not speak to him the sweet words thou art wont to say to him. A pleasant voice brings the snake out of its hole; and the poisonous adder is charmed with music. His heart will incline to thee when he sees thee."

But Hilwe's courage failed her; she did not know why. And then there was so much connected with the rose harvest demanding her time and attention, she felt she must wait till it was over.

For all that, she probably would have obeyed her heart's promptings and gone to Hassan, had she not been so closely watched. There were too many enemies present to permit her to carry out her purpose unobserved.

In the evenings the women performed the shawl dance; and then the sword dance, in which they gave the penetrating ear-splitting war-cry, — "El-el-el-loo" — used in the battle to incite the men to the charge, and stimulate them to more active and deadly combat.

Hassan was outside it all. He, the great strong son of the soil, had no place in the sports. Though he saw the flash and heard the reports of the men's guns in the "fantasia," as their horses plunged forward in the mimic encounter, he was a prohibited element.

As the shades of evening gathered more thickly, Hassan's desires and anxieties became too much for him. He could not keep away.

"I am a fool," he said.

Something compelled and drew him to the place. He could not help it. He slipped from rock to rock and from tree to tree, till at length he was on forbidden ground — in the enemy's country. He stood concealed behind a huge fig-tree fronted with pomegranate shrubs and rose-bushes.

He was now very near the revellers, and could hear Hilwe's voice and see her distinctly. The young man's heart throbbed and plunged and swelled within him as he saw her mingle with the various groups.

How beautiful she looked! None of the daughters of Malha or Bettîr compared with her.

"But she thinks not of me," he said. "I must stand here concealed, like a contemptible fellow, not daring to show myself, while they make merry with her."

This filled him with darkness, jealousy, and rage, — the thunder and lightning of the soul.

There were moments when, in spite of the folly of it, he would have broken out upon them, had not better thoughts prevailed.

At the close he saw them lead Hilwe forward, with

exultation and clapping of hands, and loud cheers, as they brought in the last basket of roses.

They had made ropes and chains of the crimson flowers which they twined around her, and on her head was a smaller basket, like a crown, filled with the finest of the blossoms, which, overflowing, mingled with her hair, and hung down upon her neck. She was the Queen of the Flowers.

Again they sang the "Chaunt of the Rose," as they danced around her and led her to her throne, with admiring cries, amid showers of roses. They seated her by a bonfire which they had built, so that Hassan beheld her more plainly than ever.

The young man, shaken with his passion, stretched out to her his hands with vehement gesture. He flung himself upon the ground, and hid his face, tortured to madness. His love had conquered him.

But the flame of the bonfire soon died out; and they all departed, leaving him alone in the darkness.

He could hear their shouts of joy, and he watched the gleam of their torches, as they went upon their winding way, up the tell to Malha.

At last the rose harvest was over.

"It has come early, and not lasted long," the people said, wishing it had been twice as long.

Only here and there, a straggling late bloomer hung its lovely blushing face behind stone fence or hedge, as if ashamed of being belated, when Kadra brought Hilwe a message from Hassan. It was not much. Barely a few words. But they were everything to Hilwe:

"In the Wady Bettîr, in the place where thou knowest, I shall await thee on the morrow. Fail me not."

Hilwe's eyes shone brightly through a mist of tears as she heard the words.

"I am greatly beholden to thee, Kadra," she said feelingly. "Blessings be upon thee for that thou hast done this day."

"Belike thou wouldst have done as much for me, had I stood in need of it. I trust I shall soon see thee clean escaped out of thy trouble."

"Allah reward thee!"

Hilwe paused. It was evident she would have made further inquiries had not her modesty prevented. She hung her head and sighed.

"And Hassan, — how did he seem?" at last she managed to ask.

"To judge by the woe-begone visage of the lad and his eagerness to bespeak my good offices, not to mention other and more particular signs, I doubt not he has had as much punishment as he could well endure,' quoth the cynical woman of Malha, who could not resist taking hold of the humorous side of the predicament in which Hassan had found himself.

There was a certain tone of drollery as well as of triumph in her voice, testifying as to her sympathy with her sex under the circumstances, which was illuminative.

"And I was the cause of it," said Hilwe sadly.

"Nay, he brought it upon himself. Besides, it will do him good, or at least no harm. He is big enough to stand it. There are none of them but would find it wholesome discipline. Yet, no doubt, it has gone hard with him; for when I tried to make light of it, and told him in sport I would take a kiss from him to thee, he would not see the pleasantry of it, but answered contemptuously, and grimly as a dervis: 'Doth one send a kiss by a messenger?' But my heart went out to him for all that, and for all my mocking words. I could not refrain. At first I told him he was making himself much trouble for nothing; and that the knife does not cut off its own handle; and I expected better of him than to make himself such a fool."

"And thou didst tell him that," exclaimed Hilwe, horrified.

"Yea. He listened very willingly to me, also. He was only too glad and anxious to be reconciled. I never saw a man so ready and willing as he was."

Hilwe was indignant.

"How couldst thou treat him so?" she cried.

But Kadra only laughed.

"He would have given me, out of gratitude, one of his best sheep; but, Allah be good to me, I could not take it from him. I considered he would need it to make up the present he must give to thy uncle for thee. Besides, what good would it do me? When they beheld the sheep in Malha, they would know whence I had it, and would set their faces against me harder than ever. So, to please him, I told him to keep it yet a little while for me, and some day we should have a feast with it. And, peradventure, it may be so."

CHAPTER XXIV

THAT night was a long and wearisome one for Hilwe; and gladly did she hail the dawning of the day which should reunite her to Hassan, — in which she should see him, eye to eye, face to face, and he should smile upon her.

Some of the women of Malha were going in the direction of the hill near the Wady Bettîr for fuel; Hilwe arranged to accompany them. It was but a little way farther to where Hassan kept his sheep.

She could hardly have patience to wait for the opportunity to steal away unnoticed; and, rapidly as her feet carried her, they seemed to her slow, and she longed for wings, that, like a bird of the mountain, she might fly to her beloved.

Kadra was too sagacious to unduly push an advantage. But her admonitory advice to Hilwe was altogether unnecessary.

"Thou must not expect too much from him. Nor that he should humble himself before thee."

This was to moderate or qualify the exaggerated impression her account of her clever conduct and management of the affair might have had upon Hilwe.

But the indignant exclamation of the latter should have been sufficient to set at rest any erroneous ideas on the subject:

"Nay, nay. That be far from me. Who am I that I should exalt myself above him?"

That Hassan should be humiliated or wounded by her was utterly repugnant to Hilwe's feelings. It would have lowered him seriously in her estimation, and was not to be thought of.

She had brought with her a little bread, a few figs and olives, and especially some of the dried cakes made of the juice and pulp of the grape, in which are embedded seeds of sesame and pine, which comestible, as already mentioned, will keep for many years, and is greatly esteemed by the people. It was the old idea of a present or peace-offering, which has been the habit of the land for thousands of years.

While she was yet a good way off, Hassan saw her, and hastened to meet her. And so he brought her back with him.

Oh, hungry eyes, and hungrier heart, and arms aching to embrace the beloved, what a feast of love is prepared for you! Poor, chafing, impatient Hassan, and gentle, enduring Hilwe, has it not come true, — the saying of the seer: "Sorrow may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning?"

Both of them were too glad at heart to feel aught but love between them, or to remember with bitterness the days which had separated them. If there was any allusion to those days, it was wrapped in some endearing expression, completely absorbing or transmuting it.

"Surely my soul longed and hungered for thee," Hassan would say. "The days were dark without thee; and at night thou didst hold the slumber from mine eyes."

"And verily my heart fainted for the light of thy countenance," was Hilwe's reply. "Did not mine eyes wait upon thee, till thou shouldst beckon me to thy side?"

They wandered all over the well-known ground, following and tending the sheep, and happy at being together.

It was the beautiful old pasturage which had belonged to Hassan's forefathers before ever the Israelites had

come into the land of Canaan. Many an ancient landmark in the shape of a block of stone set into the ground, or a heap of boulders, denoted the boundaries, some of which had remained unmoved from generation to generation, for time out of mind.

"Cursed be he who moveth his neighbour's landmark" is an archaic malediction.

Near by was the fenced inclosure where Hassan had slain the leopard, and beyond was the cave, while midway between was the spring of water gushing out of the rock and forming the little pool where Hassan had bathed and by which he had prayed on that eventful morning. They visited all these places with much more interest and delight than if they were new to them, and had much to relate of the various incidents connected with each, which they were never tired of dilating on.

"I am happier than ever," Hassan kept repeating. "Only the true lover knows the joys of love."

It was the season of the "latter rain." But the showers had not fallen with their usual abundance.

"Unless we have more rain soon, the ears of corn will not fill with grain," the fellaheen began to murmur.

"Nor will the cisterns be filled with sufficient water," others said, who were dependent on this resource for their supply.

Since the "former rain," that of the autumn and winter, which had been copious, the rainfall had been scant, confined to light intermittent showers, altogether insufficient for the perfect maturing of the principal crops. But otherwise the season had been favourable, advanced and warm; and certain fruits, vegetables and other products of the soil were unusually early, as we have seen in the case of the roses. Those lands susceptible to irrigation were, of course, largely independent of the rainfall, and were comparatively flourishing, of which the gardens of Bettîr were a striking example.

For several days past, Hassan had watched the clouds as they had gathered in great masses overhead, promis-

ing the welcome downpour. They were the true nimbus, heavy with blessing. But day after day they had dispersed, or drifted off, carrying their precious contents with them undischarged, and disappointing the hopes of thousands.

There are few lands, if any, in which certain meteorological phenomena can be studied to greater advantage than in Palestine. Among the more interesting of such spectacles is the action of the dry air-cushion as there manifested during the rainy season. This is seen to perfection around Jerusalem. Often, for several days together, enormous volumes of cloud will gather, commonly from the direction of the Mediterranean, till the entire dome of the firmament is occupied by them; but owing to the intervening cushion of dry air, they cannot discharge their contents upon the earth. The dry air-cushion continues to absorb the moisture, and until it is completely saturated no rain can come through to descend upon the thirsty land.

The clouds are frequently seen to gather for three days before the result is produced. Not seldom a longer period is required.

In a country so denuded of its forests and so sparingly under cultivation as is Palestine, the gentle mediation of tree and shrub, spear of cereal, and acuminate leaf of all kinds, is to a serious extent wanting, *en masse*, or is so restricted as to be of little positive effect. As is well known, through those simple and beautiful agencies, thousands upon thousands of gallons of water are pumped daily into the atmosphere. Here the unsaturated air-cushion is almost entirely deprived of this aid, or receives comparatively inappreciable moisture from beneath. Hence an additional factor in the protracted character of the phenomenon.

Were the forests renewed, and were there more liberal planting of olive groves, fig orchards, and vineyards, with general cultivation of the land, doubtless the rainfall would be more abundant and more equably distributed, and not be confined to special seasons or subject to paroxysmal and injurious outbursts alternating with droughts.

As the hours went by, the sultriness of the morning had passed into an oppressive oven-like glow, accompanied by an ominous stillness which, to Hassan, experienced in weather signs, as he turned his cheek to catch the aerial premonitions, was of threatening import.

"We shall have the rain this time," he said to Hilwe. "A storm is brewing. The clouds have been gathering these many days."

A distant rumble of thunder, shortly succeeded by a nearer concussion, confirmed his words.

Suddenly it grew quite dusk.

"I shall gather the sheep together into shelter, so they shall be in good shape for it."

This he at once proceeded to do.

The clouds, hanging low, till their ragged edges seemed to trail upon the ground, now assumed a greenish and copper-hued glare, which gave to everything a ghastly complexion. Beyond, thick skirts of darkness enveloped them.

There was the tenseness of anxiety in Hilwe's face which was more expressive than words as to her apprehensions.

"I fear it," was all she said.

"Nay; the rain is sorely needed. It will do good."

But though Hassan spoke thus confidently, to reassure her, it was evident he was not without participating in her anxiety, at least to some extent.

There was a slight, breezy sound and stir in the boughs of a group of olive-trees which stood near. It was just enough to show the white underside of the leaves, which, thrown against the black and coppery menace of the horrible body of cloud, gave the trees the effect of crouching and blanching with fear at what was coming.

Soon a hot puff of sirocco-like wind, as if it came from a cannon, struck the faces of the man and woman. A blinding flash of lightning rent the vapoury curtain, and sprang out towards them like a golden viper; while almost instantaneously, a deafening detonation shook the heavens and the earth till they trembled.

Heavy drops of rain now began to fall thick and fast.

"Hasten, Hilwe; we shall yet reach the cave before the worst comes," cried Hassan, as he caught her hand to help her forward.

The first blasts of the almost hurricane-like wind nearly carried them off their feet, and took away their breath. The dust of the ground was caught up into a whirling column. They had scarcely reached the mouth of the cavern when the rain descended, no longer in drops, but in broad sheets, as if rivers of water were pouring out of the sky. At the same time the entire atmosphere and the ground seemed afire with the incessant flashes of the electric fluid, which were accompanied by as incessant thundering.

Neither Hassan nor Hilwe had ever been exposed to, altogether, so fearful a storm. It could only be likened to the description in the old psalm, which originally must have been a transcription of a similar scene.

What a grand panorama is disclosed! the fire running along the ground, and hail mingled with fire. The Lord thundered. "The earth shook and trembled; the foundations of the hills moved and were shaken. . . . He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. . . . He did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire. . . . He shot out lightnings. The channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered."

Now, like many another cave in Palestine, in the case of this one (which, as has been mentioned, was largely used by Hassan as his temporary quarters, as a refuge in bad weather, and sometimes as a sleeping place), the entrance sloped abruptly downward as it passed inward, so that the level of the extreme inner end was considerably lower than that of the mouth. Outside was a mound-like barrier, composed partly of the debris of crumbling rock from above, accumulating through ages, partly of the cleaning out of the cave.

This served as a perfect protection against the ingress of ordinary rains and floods, so that during the entire time of Hassan's occupancy of the place it had remained clean and dry, and free from all danger from such sources.

But this was no ordinary storm. The windows of heaven were opened. It was a vast cloud-burst sweeping everything before it. From the cliffs above the waters poured as a cataract. They rushed in a torrent down the steep incline. They leaped like a foaming wild beast over the mound-like barrier, and broke in an irresistible flood into the cavern.

The effect was instantaneous.

Before Hassan and Hilwe comprehended the nature of the danger, or, indeed, knew what had happened, they were smitten, seized and overwhelmed by the mighty wave, and dashed backward against the rocky rear wall. He reached forward to try to save Hilwe, but it was in vain.

Bewildered, stunned, blinded, gasping for breath, Hassan lost consciousness for a moment. He was powerless in the grasp of such a force, till in its recoil it yielded, having satisfied itself.

Thereupon, with the instinct of self-preservation inherent in all living creatures, hardly knowing what he did, he clutched with his hands and feet the rough projections of the rocky wall, and thereby lifted himself above the water, that now was rising rapidly, being already of dangerous depth.

He shook the clinging moisture from his eyes and hair, as a dog shakes himself dry, and looked around him in the semi-darkness. He perceived the character of the terrible calamity which had overwhelmed them; and he missed Hilwe.

"Oh, Hilwe, I cannot see thee! Where art thou?" he exclaimed in loud and lamentable entreaty.

There was no response, other than the hollow reverberations of the cave.

"Where art thou, my beloved?" again he called.

Then, receiving no answer, he lifted up his voice in that piteous cry, the most deplorable sound in nature,

— the agonised outburst of a man's grief. There were no words in it, — it was only a cry. But those who have heard such, care not again to hear it.

Hilwe, in the rebound and wild eddies of the water, had been borne away from the spot where Hassan clung. After a few useless struggles, confused and baffled, her strength nearly expended, she had succumbed to the inevitable, and sank in the dark flood.

But life scarcely ever yields itself to death without repeated effort for deliverance. Is it the love of the soul for the body it has so long dwelt in? Or what is it? There is a salvatory force within that gathers itself for resistance. Twice had Hilwe striven with her untoward fate, rising to the surface of the water, unseen by Hassan, for he was dazed and stupefied by his own experience, and the gloom of the cavern had thickened. When, the third time, with a feeble dying effort she again rose, the insistent, searching, heaven-taught eye of love, piercing the darkness, found the object of its quest, — Hassan saw her.

Without a thought, without an instant's pause, he plunged into the water and faced the inrushing torrent, which was shutting out the light more and more.

Strong must the arms be to buffet such a force, — brave the heart to face such a danger. But "perfect love casteth out fear."

With difficulty he made headway. More than once, in spite of all his efforts, he was borne backwards; and repeatedly the angry spirit of the current frustrated his attempts by snatching the sinking form of Hilwe when almost within his grasp and whirling it in an opposite direction. More than once he dived deep for her, in vain. But at last he reached her, and clasped her in his arms, lifting her head upon his breast above the swell.

"I have saved thee!" he exclaimed. "Now am I glad."

At length he worked his way, bearing her lovingly, triumphantly, thoughtless of himself, with a few brave strokes, to a place in the cave where rudely-cut notches in the rock led up to a chamber-like recess in the rear.

In fact it was Hassan's sleeping-place, and where he kept his stores.

The water had now risen much higher; for the inrush was far greater than any of the existing outlets, which were partially blocked, could carry off. Slowly and carefully he climbed with his precious burden. She still clung to him with the despairing grip of the drowning.

"Save me!" he heard her murmur.

There was much danger, in the crowding darkness, of slipping and falling into the murky depths. How strong his arms were to hold her to him! He gloried in them and in his strength to deliver her. How sure were his feet to clasp the ribbed rock! Only one of his hands was free. Her head hung over his shoulder. But he gained the hollowed recess, with a sob of praise to Allah, and with the thrill of joy that only the natural man can feel in all its rude intensity of fulness.

"Thou hast saved me," she whispered, her lips close to his, and then she was silent.

Proudly, lovingly, those strong arms of his, finely rounded as in an antique statue, held her to him in long embrace. What a giant he was, — a Colossus of love! All his restrained, accumulated longing asserted itself. He kissed her, he whispered to her words of endearment. There was no one like him. Who could love as he could love?

But there came to him no reply.

"Oh, my Hilwe," he cried, "why wilt thou not speak to me? Art thou ashamed? When one is in love, what shame remains?"

He held his mouth to hers, but she did not kiss him; he could not feel her breathe.

"Hilwe, my beloved, my little love, it is I — thine own Hassan; wilt thou not say one word to me?"

He repeated this, over and over.

Then, in an agony of fear, he thought that her flesh was growing cold.

"O God! is she dying? Is she dead? Have I slain her with my love?" he sobbed.

He had found the corner where was his simple bed, — the bed he had so often slept in, — a few armfuls of dried grass and a mat. He had laid her there with the greatest tenderness. He now searched out his earthen lamp, and with flint and steel struck a light; and having lighted the lamp, set it in the little niche made for it.

Small as was the room-like recess partly cut in the rock, the flickering flame barely illuminated its narrow bounds, and showed that, according to the very modest ideas of the Palestine peasant, Hassan had provided it only with what was necessary for his temporarily abiding there.

When he saw the death-like pallor of Hilwe's face, he was greatly moved. He tore off the rent remnant of her drenched garments that the waves had left, and commenced chafing her limbs. How sacred the fair body was to him! It was his. It could not be more to him. He knew the desperateness of the case, and that no time must be lost.

The morning had been so warm that, fortunately, he had left his abai with other of his raiment here. He wrapped her in the warm folds of the striped robe, that was like an old friend, and never ceased his exertions over her.

"O Allah, the Most Merciful, if I have done evil, and this is the punishment, forgive me!" was his supplication; "or if not, lay thy hand in judgment upon me alone, and save the innocent!"

He heard the lapping and surging of the wild water, and knew it had now risen within a few feet of this, their last retreat.

"If Hilwe is dead I care not to live," he said. "Let us both perish together! My darling, my life, I shall die with thee!"

Then, when the horribleness of their fate presented itself, he murmured:

"And was it this which was written from the beginning? Was this, all the time, to be the end?"

The roar of the relentless storm as it still raged without and within, made the walls of the cave to

reverberate and shiver. The water was now smiting the very threshold of their retreat, and seemed to hiss in his ears the words: "There is no hope. Of what good is all thy labour? If thou bringest her back to life it is only to die miserably, — to drown with thee."

"Yes, even then," he replied, "I should die happy, if she should but smile in my face once more. But, who knows? Allah may have mercy upon us at the last, and the waters may abate."

In his passionate distress he caught her to him once again.

"Let me warm her back to life!" he said. "O God, hear me! Take my warmth and my strength to save her! Take my life, and put it into her, that she may live; and let me perish out of the land of the living, if it be thy will!"

While yet the petition was upon his lips, the newly-returned soul trembled within his arms. He felt the heart beat against his heart, slowly and softly at first, and then more surely; and all the warm pulsation awoke throughout the body. The breath of life touched the mouth. The eyes opened, and looked into his eyes with fond recognition. The arms went up and closed about his neck, and drew his lips to her lips.

Great tears were coursing down the cheeks of the magnificent young giant.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"You are with me," he said.

CHAPTER XXV

THE storm continued to rage into the night, but with lessened fury. Still the water did not cease to pour into the cave, the result of the overflow of the vast watershed; and Hassan anxiously watched, as the level rose with a constancy which was maddening.

He tried to keep the truth from Hilwe; but it was impossible, and she became a sharer in his distress.

It was a terrible heart-searching ordeal — one which tries the souls of men. As he held his feeble lamp-light over the black mass of water filling the cave, and saw the stealthy creeping up upon them of the cold dark snake-like death, it was enough to chill the life, and slay the courage of the bravest.

But Hilwe was by his side.

Yes, — his joy and comfort, and his sorrow.

How he tortured his mind in trying to plan some means of escape, before the worst should come, and ere the waters closed in upon them, and overwhelmed them. He, so big and strong, so full of life and force, so powerful, and yet so helpless. At times he felt as if he could rend the rocks with his hands, and make a way of deliverance for Hilwe and himself. He could hardly believe that they must perish.

His mind wandered.

"I shall make a dash with her through the fierce waters," he said.

Yet he remembered with what difficulty he had stemmed the flood for even that short distance, when unencumbered, in rescuing Hilwe, and he knew it would be impossible for them to make the mouth of the cave against such a tremendous power.

How it went through him like a sharp arrow as Hilwe asked him: "Does the water still rise, Hassan?"

He would shake his head, but make no other reply.

At last, when the flood began rolling over the floor, and the night close at hand, he felt the end had come.

"Yet will I not despair," he said. "Despair is infidelity."

He drew Hilwe to him; and when a stream of water ran up to where they sat, this great natural man moved her away, to a higher part, where the bed was, and hid her face in his bosom, so she might not see, and covered his eyes with his hand.

"Thou art not afraid to die with me, Hilwe?"

The words were on his lips; but he did not speak them.

"It is enough for *one* to know the evil," he said. "I shall conceal it from her till the last."

He rolled some of his spare garments into a pillow, and, placing it under her head, tried to make her lie down.

"Sleep, thou art weary, and nigh worn-out," he said. "I will watch while thou takest rest."

"Nay, but thou wilt then be alone," she protested, refusing. "Let me stay by thee."

So he consented; otherwise he knew it would pain her; and they sat together, as before, her face hidden in his bosom. And as they thus sat, each succeeding moment he expected to feel the stinging lash of the climbing wave, as it broke in upon them, overwhelming them. And repeatedly, in torturing iteration, as before, rang in his ears the taunt: "Of what use is all thy labour? There is no hope. If thou bringest her back to life, it is only to drown with thee."

At length it became as a dreamy lullaby sung in the ears of a drowsy child, who does not want to go to sleep, and yet cannot keep his eyes open. The air of the cave was close. His head nodded, and at last, after a few vain struggles, fell forward on his breast. Hilwe already had been overcome. They both slept, for very fatigue and the heaviness of the air, in presence of their great danger.

And yet the consciousness of it and of his sleep was upon him. But he could not deliver himself, though he attempted it, in broken moments.

He dreamed he was tangled in a net which held him fast; and that the more he struggled, the more inextricable became his position. Finally it was impressed upon him that to lie still, to succumb, was his only chance of escape. It was part of the fitful dream. So he gave way and, in consequence, fell into a deep slumber.

How long the uneasy trance born of weariness and the closeness of the air (for it was that rather than sleep) was upon him he did not know; but it was already night.

Suddenly he was awakened as if by a supernatural voice.

The words came to him distinctly:

"Awake, Hassan! The waves are upon thee." He started up with a hideous sense of culpability — of betrayed trust. He was certain they were engulfed.

The lamp was flickering and spluttering, on the verge of going out.

He seized and lifted Hilwe in his arms; and, as he went to replenish the expiring light from his store of oil, the feeling of being flooded so impressed him, he imagined he was wading with her through the water.

In the motion given by his movements to the air, the lamp went out. But he blew upon the smouldering, smoking wick until the flame leaped back, and, re-fed with oil, blazed up anew.

As, lamp in hand, he peered about the cell, he was greatly astonished, not only to find no water, but also to see that the floor was mostly dry, and that even the stream which had poured in at one end had returned whence it came, as if drained off.

Setting down Hilwe, he ran to the opening.

"Surely the waters have not advanced," he thought. "They have not prevailed; but, if at all changed they have abated."

Yet he feared he but fancied it, and would not trust himself to tell Hilwe, lest he should raise her hope to disappoint it.

Presently he went again and surveyed the black depths.

Hilwe noticing his intense earnestness, asked him, as before, "Do the waters still increase upon us, Hassan?"

"Allah be praised; but, as I live, I believe they recede. Come hither, Hilwe, and judge for thyself. See if I mistake not."

She flew to his side, and perceived it was even as he had said.

"Thou art right," she said exultantly. "They are falling."

"Then thou art saved," he exclaimed, showing that, throughout, his chief thought was for Hilwe, and to save her.

Taking her hand in his, he led her backward to the bed.

"Now thou canst lay thee down and take thy rest in peace. Allah the Most Merciful hath delivered us. Praise be to his holy name."

And so, relieved of the intense strain which had tortured them, in the sudden reaction they found the sweet slumber of the weary, and, like two lost children, slept into the morning watch.

They dreamed they were in Paradise, — as well they might, so great was the contrast with the horror they had so lately escaped. And when their eyes were opened, when they woke on the morrow, they could not understand, for some moments, what had happened, and how they were together in the cave.

The place was doubtless one of the resorts or abodes of the ancient Canaanites, before the building of houses had been adopted. Who could tell but that Hassan's ancestors, those mighty men of Anak, had occupied this very cavern with their wives, their children and their cattle?

The abundance of such dens and retreats in Palestine sufficiently attest their use in the prehistoric age, their occasional or partial occupation continuing to the present day. Great is the interest and importance attached to them from their historic associations and frequent mention in Bible times. There were caves of sepulchre, as, for instance, Machpelah, which Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite, at Hebron, that he might bury Sarah. There were caves of refuge, to which in time of war or other trouble the people had recourse, hiding themselves therein, till the danger was passed. Obadiah concealed one hundred prophets in a cave on Mount Carmel; Elijah lodged in a cave on Mount Horeb; and the cave of Adullam, to which David retreated and to which all that were in distress or discontented or disaffected resorted, till soon he had four hundred followers, has it not become a proverb among the nations? Even the Holy Temple was built over the cave and threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, from whom King David purchased them. Christ was born in a cave.

Hassan was up betimes that morning. As the sun

rose, the slanting rays entered and smote the surface of the water, making a dancing network of reflected light upon the roof, so that he knew the weather was fair; and he greatly rejoiced with Hilwe.

Yet had they to remain within their prison for another day and night. It was not till the following or third day that the waters were sufficiently abated to permit him safely to carry Hilwe out.

But they were far from murmuring at this. It, moreover, seemed to them that it was a confirmation of their destiny — an establishment of the relations which had arisen between them. It was written — it was fate — the will of Allah that they should be man and wife.

Hilwe, with the sweet and patient nature of unselfish woman, took pleasure in setting things to rights, and keeping them in order, and in preparing their slender meals from Hassan's frugal store. They began to feel as if it had long been so with them. It strengthened their hearts; for usage sanctions, and wont substantiates. She gathered together the few simple vessels of pottery, such as are in use all over the country, and in which he had kept his provisions or which he had employed in partaking of his food, and she cleansed and arranged them, as a housewife should, laughing, meanwhile at Hassan's carelessness in the keeping of them, and ridiculing his negligence and ignorance in domestic duties, to his great delight.

Added to Hassan's trial had been the fear that his scanty supply of food might not be sufficient to last them. It assuredly would not were they detained beyond a certain very brief period in the cave. How carefully and cunningly he abstained from fully satisfying his appetite, so that the few cakes of bread and few handfuls of figs and olives might be eked out to the utmost, and, at the same time, that Hilwe might not notice his friendly stratagem!

Hassan repeatedly tested the depth of the water, and when the morning of the third day dawned, he considered it best no longer to postpone the attempt to escape. Though in the deeper places he was submerged to his loins, he bore Hilwe on his broad shoulders

through the dark flood, yet not without many a stumble, to dry land outside. She bore on her head, made up into a bundle, such of their garments and other effects as they required.

The first sensation they experienced was one of extreme thankfulness, as they inhaled, once more, the clear free air of the mountain-side. The next moment a pitiful cry of surprise and pain burst from Hassan's lips, which Hilwe's echoed. Lifting up their eyes they had seen at a glance the woful devastation, the work of the storm.

"Oh, my sheep, my poor sheep!" he exclaimed. "What has become of them? They are destroyed! Utterly wiped out. The sheep of my pasture."

"Allah have pity!" cried Hilwe, and wrung her hands and wept.

"I led them in and out," continued Hassan, "they knew my voice, and followed me whithersoever I went. And they were to me as my life. I fed them in the green valleys, and on the pleasant hillside, and brought them where there was abundant water. There was none like to them. They were well-favoured. They wanted for nothing. They were white as the snow on Mount Hermon, and beautiful to behold. And now where are they?"

It was a cry out of Nature rather than a human utterance.

Hassan's head fell forward on his breast. After the first agonised outburst, his voice was silent — he was dumb. Hilwe stood behind him, speechless in the presence of such a woe.

In every direction the sheep lay scattered — drowned, wounded, maimed, dead. Some of the lifeless bodies, washed down into the gullies and hollows of the rocks, were floating in deep pools of water, — for every cleft and depression and crevice had been turned into standing water, and brimmed level, and to overflowing in that passionate rage of the elements which had mocked and smitten the place.

Flocks of crows, vultures and ravens had gathered in unusual numbers, and either had entered already on

their hideous task, or crowded the rocks in anticipation of what they had come to do.

Hassan, noticing a vulture tearing a dead sheep which had been a favourite, rushed towards it in a frantic rage he could not control, and drove the unclean fowl away. It slowly rose, and alighted on an adjoining rock, ready to resume its work.

"Hilwe," he said, "I am a poor man. I have lost everything. And those also who trusted their sheep to me, and gave them into my hand, have been deprived of them. We are all destitute together. What shall I say? What shall I do? How shall I render account or answer? What shall become of us?"

Hilwe did not dare reply. It was not expected she should speak. What could she say? She sank upon the spot where she had stood. She hid her face in her hands, and mourned as though her heart would break.

This somewhat recalled Hassan to himself. He resumed his seat upon the rock beside her, and would have comforted her.

Slowly his thoughts gathered strength — they gathered themselves together, even as a river which, in some convulsion of nature, has forsaken its bed, leaving it empty and dry and desolate, despoiled of all beauty and grace, returns once more to the places it formerly had made pleasant and glad, and again fills the arid courses with life.

It was a silent but steady process.

He sat with hands clasped before him, his eyes gazing steadfastly out beyond the surrounding desolation. His lips, moving slightly, gave forth no audible words.

Islâm. The very name of their religion means resignation — submission to the will of God.

While he held his peace and mused, his heart grew mellow within him, and at length he spoke, and made confession with his tongue:

"It is Allah. It cometh from his hand. Who am I that I should question the judge of all the earth, or say he doeth not all things well? He hath given. He hath taken away that which he gave, and which was his own to take. Let me hide my mouth in the dust; but let

me not reproach the Creator and him who made me. Shall I not yet praise his holy name for the goodness he shall do unto me?"

The pained expression had gone out of his eyes. He gathered his raiment about him, and with the air of one whose mind is made up, he turned to Hilwe.

"Arise," he said. "Let us be going. It is time we should depart. Must I not see thee on the way to thine home and thy people, where even now they consider thee as one dead."

Hilwe arose as he spoke, and made preparation to follow him.

"It is well," was her simple reply.

"Hadst thou not thought otherwise, Hilwe, and that it were not best at this time, I surely would have taken thee to my own dwelling-place, even to Bettîr. I would have dared do it. Yet perhaps thou art right. Thine is the more prudent way, especially in the great trouble which hath befallen us."

As they passed from under the sheltering rocks and into the main pathway, they came into full view of the Valley of Bettîr.

Looking up the winding wady, crowned at the head with its stately tell, expecting the glad and pleasant sight which had always met their gaze when bent in this direction, they both suddenly stood still, appalled and as if turned to stone.

The beautiful valley which, in all its loveliness, had blessed their eyes when last they looked upon it, was utterly transformed — ruined. They could scarce believe that they saw aright. The Angel of Destruction had been there also — had stretched his hand over height and hollow, dingle and slope; the wild tempest-blast and cloud-burst had swept the length and breadth of the place, and this was the result.

The fast-maturing corn and other crops were entirely torn away; many of the fruit-trees were uprooted, they had been drifted about like feathers; and the fair fields and pastures which had smiled so peacefully three days ago, were laid bare and naked in the sight of Heaven. The overcharged aqueduct had burst,

carrying all before it and devastating the lower lands. The bottom of the valley was a pool of standing water, filled with the debris, and the havoc was as heart-rending as it was complete. The besom of Euroclydon, the storm-wind, had done its work thoroughly; the very earth was swept and washed away by the tropical rain deluge — the work of years blotted out in a moment.

Hassan and Hilwe stood, side by side, almost motionless. Their eyes were fixed upon the scene of wrath and terror, as if it had hypnotised them.

"Little do we know," at last spoke Hassan. "We are as fools, and know nothing. Verily I thought my affliction which had come upon me grievous and hard to be borne — yea, intolerable; and now, behold, it is as nothing to this unspeakable calamity. We sat and lamented our loss, almost within sight of this great and terrible overthrow, and we knew it not. O my people, ye are indeed afflicted; and the home of my fathers is desolate! Solitary as a widow, tears are on her cheeks. She hath none to comfort her. Stripped and peeled and smitten, how shalt thou, O Bettîr! stand before this trouble, to endure it?"

They could see, scattered here and there among the uprooted fruit-trees and the soaked and untimely reapage of the grain fields garnered by the storm, the dead carcasses of sheep and cattle. This touched Hassan to the quick. He groaned in spirit.

"The flocks and herds of Bettîr were beyond all others beautiful, they were above praise," he murmured. "They filled the pastures of the valleys and the hillsides with gladness, and their lowings and bleatings rejoiced the heart. Where shall we seek them, or the like of them? The anger of the heavens hath devoured them. As for me, I have no sheep to tend. — But who am I that I should speak of myself when all are suffering? And now — "

He could say no more. The words, broken against his grief, refused to come.

That inexpressible pain — the agony of agonies — the torture which seizes the man overwhelmed with misfortune and loss, whose heart is too strong to break,

compressed as in a hand of iron the heart and brain of poor Hassan.

His brain reeled, if his stalwart legs did not tremble. What could be expected of him? The man of high gifts and culture, and of religious training in the doctrines of Christ, has bent, supine and despairing, in such a trial as this. Hassan, fellah of the fellaheen, peasant of peasants, with peculiar environment, narrow horizon, his knowledge of the world limited, and his experience of life outside of the simple daily routine of the Palestine shepherd restricted and contracted, how shall we judge him?

But his faith did not fail him.

"Yet are we in the hands of God, the All-Merciful."

This was his refuge, and these the words upon his lips, even when all was dark about him, and his feet had well-nigh stumbled out of the way.

"I am as a man who sleeps and dreams," he said, "who sees strange and unaccountable things, and does that which is regrettable, — or who beholds appalling sights, so that the hair of his body stands on end, his heart is affrighted, and his knees are bowed with apprehension of that which is coming upon him, and which there is no escaping. He awakes, and lo, it is a dream — only a vision of the night! But *I* do not wake. Or if I wake I know not, for the dread thing is still before me! Touch me, Hilwe! See if I sleep. Or dost thou, too, perceive that which I behold?"

The tears were pouring down Hilwe's face, and sobs were choking her, so that she could not make herself understood.

She laid her hand in his — that useful clever little hand of hers, that had done so much work and good, lay nestling, like a brown bird, in the broad generous palm of the handsome young giant.

"Allah comfort thee!" she whispered.

The next moment they were clasped in each other's arms.

"Yea, Allah hath sent thee, as his angel, to speak peace and comfort to my soul. Weep not, Hilwe. I

have forgotten myself, and am no man. Why should I lay my burden upon thee? Why should I be cast down? Let me praise Allah and take courage. Mayhap it is not as bad as it seems. Some of the flocks and herds must have been driven into the houses, and are saved. And the upper caves could not have been flooded, and must have sheltered others."

In this last, in the midst of his anguish, he spoke against his judgment, to soothe the grief of his beloved.

There was that in the sweet loving nature of the man which rose above his personal trouble, and lifted him into the region of compassion — compassion for others.

As they walked together towards Malha, his mind was filled with the thoughts of what he would do to aid the stricken, and restore as much as possible the damage which had been done by the storm. "When thou art safe in Malha," he said, "I shall return at once to Bettîr, and do what I can to help and console them."

This was the burden of their conversation. They touched little upon themselves, and how all this which had happened would reflect disastrously upon them. Yet no one knew better than they did how much more hopeless than before was their cause, and how almost insuperable were the difficulties to be surmounted in a country so welded to ancient custom, and where the possession of the bride is obtained only through the presenting of heavy gifts to her family and the payment of a sum enormously extravagant for a people comparatively so poor.

"Yes, I must do all I can to help them," he said.

Men, as well as nations, are truly great when, unselfishly, they rise to their emergencies, and deal with them in the spirit of the God-Man, who to-day walks the earth, perhaps nearer than ever before to the realisation of his birthright — his kingdom.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN Hilwe entered Malha, she found, as Hassan had said, her people lamenting her as one who had ceased to live. At first they almost looked upon her as a spirit, and their superstitious feelings did not wear away for several days.

They closely questioned her regarding the incidents connected with the time in which she had been absent. And though she made the best of the peculiar circumstances, describing her great peril, and her narrow escape from death, through her rescue and shelter in the cave with Hassan, there were grave surmises, and openly expressed condemnation as to her conduct, while they could not deny the necessity of the case.

It is probable she would have fared worse at their hands, and have experienced the more severe rigour of their inquisitorial methods, had not the concurrence of other and more important events engrossed their attention.

The chief of these was also connected with the storm, and was of the most fatal character, involving the loss of many lives. In some of its features it resembled the catastrophe which had overtaken Hassan and Hilwe and had devastated Bettîr.

A party of men, women, and children, all Moslems, and the larger number pilgrims returning from celebrating the feast of Neby Moussa, — the prophet Moses, — from the reputed tomb of the great lawgiver, to escape the sudden violence of the storm, had taken refuge in a cave situated in a narrow rocky pass. In the tremendous conflict of the elements, they were congratulating themselves on having escaped the worst, and at having found a place of refuge, when there occurred what was described as the bursting of a waterspout. It appeared to be the centre of the storm which had extended to Bettîr. Confined to the contracted defile, the immense body of water rushed headlong in what had all the character of a raging river between high rocky banks; and,

without a moment's warning, broke into and filled the cave like a deluge.

It was a piteous but swift agony.

A fearful struggle ensued, amid the shrieks and screams of the women and children. Heroic efforts were made to save life, but in such fearful odds even the strongest men were but as straws and rubbish, dashed about at the mercy of the flood.

When all was over, thirty-five dead bodies were taken out.

The news of this sad event had reached Malha before the arrival of Hilwe, and made a great impression there, and also on the surrounding country, where a number of those who had perished had either lived or were known.

As the accounts of the disasters which had overwhelmed Bettîr came in, day by day, they also served to distract attention, and were received with a grim satisfaction which occasionally expanded into notes of triumph, born of the old enmity and hatred. Malha itself had escaped with but slight injury, and so could look down upon Bettîr as being the special subject of Divine wrath.

Then followed renewed reports of the approaching arrival of the long-expected Palestine regiment. It had been detained to subdue a revolt; but would enter Jerusalem, doubtless, in a day or two. They must go forth to meet it, with due preparation, and manifestations of respect and welcome.

So Hilwe was comparatively overlooked.

Hassan, according to his intention, had immediately returned to Bettîr, where he proved to be an invaluable aid in the work of restoration. The harvest, indeed, had been swept away, the vineyards washed out, and of the great flocks and herds, the famous sheep and cattle, but few remained to testify as to what they had been. The people were impoverished. But of the fruit-trees, a large number could be replanted. Many of them were but slightly shifted, others were only bent over, or had the branches broken. With proper attention, the majority of them could be saved.

"Let us come up to the help of Bettîr," was the rallying cry of Hassan. "Let her sons be united to deliver her, and make the desolate places straight."

Who could refuse?

It was astonishing what a renewed aspect the place had put on in a short time. The aqueduct had been repaired, and the water confined to its proper channels. The rubbish had been cleared off and burned. The vineyards had been replanted, the fruit-trees in great part restored, and the fields and gardens set in order. In all this Hassan had been the leading spirit; and, seconded by the sheik and Chalîl, the people obeyed him willingly.

He saw the ruined fields in which lately the crop had been whitening already to harvest, and sadly recalled the joyous sowing of the grain in the early days of the year. In Palestine they sow and plough at the same time. They cast the seed, and turn the furrow upon it. How plainly he saw and heard the peasants as they scattered the wheat broadcast before the plough, singing their chant, "Feed us, O Lord, and all thy creatures!"

Alas for that unreaped harvest!

The whirlwind had gathered it.

"Let us trust God and take courage!" was Hassan's cry in the presence of the people.

So keenly did he suffer from the loss of the sheep which had been intrusted to him, that he felt he could not do enough to make amends. Yet he had not been to blame.

The greater part of the sheep had not been Hassan's, but had belonged to the sheik, Abou Chalîl. As everyone knew, Hassan had taken great pride in the flock, which, through his incessant care and skill, had increased unto a multitude, and was noted for its beauty and fine condition.

But, much as the losses and disaster meant to the grand old patriarch, not a murmur fell from his lips. He had been well brought up, and for many a year had been trained in that school of experience of good and evil, of prosperity and adversity, that he believed Allah had appointed, and that tries the souls of men, and

moulds character. The only change visible in him was that he was kinder and gentler in his manner.

Especially did he show this to Hassan, as if to assure him that he cherished no bitterness towards him. Whenever he addressed him now, it was "Hassan, my son."

The young man's heart was touched, and, with all his pride and strength, he could have bent and kissed the sheik's feet.

Hassan and Chalîl occupied, as heretofore, the old stone house which had been the dwelling of the former's father and mother. As, wearied from their toil, both the friends at night lay down to sleep together, with the unrestrained familiarity which had existed between them from boyhood, Chalîl referred to this action of his sire:

"Didst thou not hear my father call thee his son, Hassan?"

"Verily I did. And it warmed and gladdened my heart, so that I well-nigh forgot my losses and my trouble. He knows I loved the sheep, and would have given my life for them."

"Yea; and that the loss was through no fault of thine. Did they not fare alike on this side? And was not a goodly share of them thine own?"

"Yet I blame myself. I cannot help it. Though it is doubtful that aught I might have done could have availed to save them. Thy father is a good man. He bears the trouble well."

"He bears it well. But he suffers; though, in his pride, he lets no one see it. There are those who will not be persuaded but that he hath a hoard, — a buried treasure. But believe it not. It is not true. He was ever more than generous with his means, and never withheld help from him who needed it. He never refused bread to the hungry, nor turned away from him who asked of him. He laid not up treasure. He is indeed stripped and peeled; and who is there to give unto him?"

"True, true. We are all ruined together. It will go hard with us till the earth once more yields her strength and her increase, and gives us bread to eat. And now I must spare the oil and quench the light. The poor man puts out his lamp early in the night."

Saying which, Hassan extinguished the feeble flickering flame, leaving the place in darkness.

"Yea, we are all poor together. But thou and I, Hassan," added Chalîl, "we stand by one another. Naught has ever come between us to divide us, or break our friendship, — neither poverty nor riches, sorrow nor joy. And shall it not ever be so?"

"It is easy for me to agree to that. I owe thee much, Chalîl; and that which I can never pay thee. All thou didst suffer at Malha —"

"Nay, mention it not. The accounts of friends are in the heart. Doth not the old proverb say that a sincere friend ought to suffer the bite of a snake for his friend? Thou speakest, too, as if the weight was on one side of the balance, and dost not remember all that I owe to thee. Didst thou not save my life once?"

So they argued, and in such gentle contention fell asleep.

The next morning, at early dawn, they were awake, as usual, and hastened to return to their labours. Unless they had given their constant supervision to the work but little would have been accomplished. Among no people is watching so necessary as with the Oriental. Unless incessantly watched, workmen and employees loiter over their tasks, or sit down to smoke. It is a perfectly-understood fact, which is supplemented by another, — it takes such a large number of persons to do a very trifling thing. Some one must always be present to direct them in the most simple operations. As already has been said, the Oriental has plenty of time in which to do nothing.

CHAPTER XXVII

OUT of the wreck and ruin of Bettîr, Hassan had one possession preserved alive. It was a precious one indeed. It was his horse, an Arab of the purest blood, of that renowned breed claiming descent

from the horse of the Prophet Mohammed himself, on which, as is believed by every true Moslem, he had performed that miraculous midnight journey from Mecca to Jerusalem.

Besides the stone house in the village which had been his father's, and the division of land apportioned to him as his individual share of the tillage held in common, the horse was all of any great value that was left to Hassan.

Without the least exaggeration, this superb animal might be said to be worthy of an emperor's stud. It had never been sold. Money would not purchase the noble creature. It was a present to Hassan from a Bedawe sheik whose life he had saved at risk of his own. In recognition of his inestimable service, the horse had become Hassan's, and was prized accordingly.

He had called him Al Borak, — "The Lightning," — after the suppositious mystic steed already mentioned, on which, moreover, it was further held the Prophet had ascended to the seventh heaven and the presence of God, returning to Mecca the same night.

The horse loved Hassan. Before he was very long in the young shepherd's possession there could be no doubt of the singularly affectionate feelings the beautiful and sagacious animal possessed for him.

The joy that Al Borak exhibited when his master mounted him was at once noticeable, and was shown in numerous ways. He seemed at such times a different creature, inspired with a rapturous force that took him outside of himself. The very weight of Hassan upon him gave him delight. The pressure of his master's legs upon his sides sent a wild thrill of pleasure through the horse, which carried the beloved burden with a gladness that love alone could inspire.

Al Borak could not bear that any one else should mount him, and resisted the act, — at length carrying the hostility so far as to attack and injure those who persisted in attempting to employ him in this way.

Of late, owing to his close occupation in tending the sheep, Hassan had not been able to use the horse as often as he formerly had done. But when he had to go

a great distance, or take a journey, Al Borak was immediately called into requisition. He delighted too, as occasion permitted, to display his equestrian skill before Hilwe, whom the horse soon came to know, Hilwe cultivating his friendship by bringing him pieces of bread and other dainties.

Hassan taught him many pretty tricks and clever ways, especially in connection with Hilwe; and the horse quickly learned to bend low to receive her on his back, at Hassan's word.

When the disaster befell Bettîr, sweeping away their crops and herds, and plunging the villagers into such great distress that many of them would have lacked the necessaries of life, had not others, but little better off, come to their assistance, Hassan had said to his friend Chalîl: "It is not proper that I who am no other than a beggar should keep a horse that is fit for a prince."

He had made up his mind what he would do; but he did not tell Chalîl till he had obtained the latter's opinion as to the propriety of parting with Al Borak.

"I have to admit that thou art right," was the reluctant admission of Chalîl. "Pity that it is so."

"Ay, pity that it is so. Al Borak was a present to me. That is the only thought that holds me back. The Bedawe who gave him to me was a prince — a sultân — the owner of five thousand camels. It is not every one I should care to see the horse with."

The next morning Hassan met the sheik, and, repeating what he had said as to the unsuitableness of such as he, a poor shepherd without his sheep, owning a horse fit for a prince, presented Al Borak to the sheik.

He had caparisoned the royal stallion in his finest trappings. He looked glorious.

"The horse is for thee, O Sheik. I would honour thee with a present. To thee only would I give him; and he will be with us, to do us credit; and it will not be as though he belonged to another village, or to a stranger. Art thou not worthier than a prince? Hast thou not been a father to thy people?"

In Palestine it is almost impossible to refuse a gift. It is difficult to do so anywhere.

Abou Chalîl was deeply moved, so that the expression of his countenance changed, and for a space he was unable to speak. He took Hassan's hand in his own, and pressed it to his breast.

"My son Hassan, how shall I praise thee?" at last spoke the sheik. "Thou bringest me a present such as one king might give to another king. Thou honourest me when my head is in the dust, when the shadow of a great misfortune hath fallen upon me and upon my people. Not out of thy abundance dost thou bring this lordly gift, for thou thyself hast been stricken, and laid low with us, and we all are poor, poor indeed, and well-nigh naked; but out of the richness of thy generosity and love, out of the noble thought of thy heart, that penury could not impoverish, hast thou done this thing. And now, my son, if I have found grace in thy sight, hearken to me; and be not offended, and take it not amiss, nor imagine that I think any the less of thee, because I cannot accept thy gift."

Hassan stood before him with bowed head.

"Speak, my father," he said, "thy servant heareth."

"Far be it from me to tell thee what thou shouldst do with that which is thine own. Yet why should I not show my heart to one who hath dealt as thou hast with me? Am I not situated even as thou art as regards the horse? Is he not beyond my condition and the poor estate into which I have fallen? It is not as though he were accustomed to work the land. He hath never passed under the yoke. It would break his proud heart to be put to the plough. Neither thou nor I could see it. Ah, no! But were the horse indeed mine, to do with according to my best judgment, I should take the price of him and distribute it among my people who are in want of seed and of food, or to repair the damage done by the storm, and repay the money borrowed of the usurers — for are we not helpless and in the hands of the money-lenders, who are without mercy, and know not compassion?"

"My father, I will do as thou sayest. Thy words are the teachings of wisdom. The horse is thine, to do with according as thou hast spoken."

As the words passed the lips of Hassan, the aged sheik fell upon his neck and kissed him.

"Blessed be thou, my son, and God reward thee as I cannot," he said. "But neither I, nor my son, nor his son's son shall forget to thee and thine the thing that thou hast done this day. God do more to me and more also, if I fail to do as I have said."

"Say no more, my father. The gift is naught as compared to the honour I bear thee. Do with the horse as seemeth good in thine eyes."

"A certain man from Jerusalem was here, not many days ago, seeking such a horse as is thine. He had heard of Al Borak, and came to see him. He gave his name as Selim, and said his master was rich and was willing to pay a goodly price for the horse if he was pleased with it. And how can he help but be pleased? There is not such another horse in all this part of the country. Would it not be well for thee to see this man's master without delay? Let him see Al Borak. That will be enough. We told the man, as we believed, that thou wouldst not part with the horse for any money."

"I am at thy disposition," replied Hassan promptly. "I will do in all things as thou hast said. I will see the man this very day, in Jerusalem. Is not Al Borak ready prepared to my hand to show him — in fine condition and fully caparisoned?"

"Yea, he is in good shape. I never saw him look better."

"In all, save one thing, will I obey thy voice. I cannot take back my word. I have given the horse to thee. He is thine. And whether the price be great or small, into thy hands it shall be paid, to do with it as thou willest; and to thee shall I render account."

Hassan had no difficulty in finding Selim, who forthwith ushered him into the presence of his master, the Count Leone Spollato. The ride from Bettîr to Jerusalem had put Hassan and Al Borak into excellent spirits, and the Count hardly knew which to admire more, the superb horse, or the fascinating young peasant.

The native on horseback feels like a prince — a changed and exalted being; and he shows this. To Hassan, so handsome already, it was not easy to add another beauty point; but, mounted on the horse, it was accomplished.

The young men were at once drawn together, and became particularly friendly and confidential. Leone took especial pains to please and entertain Hassan, who was easily beguiled into telling about himself and his experiences, in return for Leone's condescension of a like character.

When Hassan told of his love for the horse, it made Leone hate to deprive him of it.

Then they rode out together, Hassan displaying the fine points of Al Borak to perfection, and Leone, carried away, determining to own the beautiful creature if money could buy him.

When Leone demanded the price he would take, with the characteristic Oriental finesse, — that nice blending of the polite and the politic, — Hassan left all that to Leone's honour.

In the end, Hassan received a larger amount than he had expected, though not more than he had appraised as the value of Al Borak.

Leone paid him in gold, as is usual in the Holy City; in twenty-franc pieces, mostly napoleons and louis d'or, with a few Austrian, Italian and Greek coins of the same value interspersed.

It made a nice little pile upon the table; though Hassan wondered how it could be an equivalent for Al Borak.

He poured it into a small canvas bag, which he securely tied with cord, feeling like a criminal.

Presently he poised the weight in his hand, and smiled as he thought of the good old sheik, and then dropped the bag into the bosom of his vest.

There was still the backsheesh, which Leone willingly added when it was explained to him.

Hassan took out the bag, opened it, and dropped in the additional coins.

The Oriental, when you have completed your busi-

ness with him, and paid him, invariably asks for backsheesh — a present or gift over and above the price agreed upon. It is an immemorial custom. So the Irish, in seeming relationship, under similar conditions, ask for something to "boot." "Backsheesh" and "boot" are synonymous terms in this respect; the "pour-boire" of the Frenchman is akin. The Englishman, on such an occasion, looks at you, and thinks, but says nothing, unless, at great exertion, he manages to stammer out with half-guilty blush the request, "something for luck."

Still Hassan lingered.

There evidently was something weighing on his mind.

Leone proposed that they take another ride.

Hassan agreeing, they went to the stable.

It was a much finer home than any Al Borak had been accustomed to, from his youth up till now. But Hassan thought it confined and close; and told Leone to let in all the air possible, and to give Al Borak all the freedom and exercise he conveniently could.

This Leone promised to do, adding that he probably would soon take him on a long journey — to Damascus, the Lebanon, Ba'albec and Beirut.

"Ah, that is what he likes!" exclaimed Hassan. "You will make him love you."

"If I possibly can."

"This time, let us exchange; you will ride Al Borak," suggested Hassan, "while I take your horse."

"All right," said Leone, well pleased.

"You ride well. But not exactly like us. He will soon get accustomed to you, though."

Hassan stood at Al Borak's head while Leone mounted.

With his usual temper, the horse turned, resenting that another than Hassan should take this liberty with him. But Hassan stroked his nose, and bending over him whispered some Arabic words in his ear.

Leone took his seat handsomely; and, after a further admonitory word to Al Borak, Hassan mounted the other horse.

They rode out quite a little distance, Leone managing the horse admirably. He did not worry him by too much handling, but gave him his own way.

With the Oriental worship of beauty, Hassan looked at Leone approvingly.

"You are a well-made man," he said, speaking in English. "You are by nature like Al Borak. You have in you what will make him love you. Since I have to part with the horse, I am glad that a man like you will be his master."

When returning, they took it more slowly. Hassan had many things he wanted to say to Leone about Al Borak, and yet it was with difficulty he spoke. He was unable to say all he wished to say; the words stuck in his throat, and seemed to choke him.

And now they were again in the stable.

Hassan had no longer any excuse for delaying. The moment for parting had come.

Leone had dismounted. The two young men stood together, side by side, but were silent.

Hassan stepped forward a single pace, and put his arm about Al Borak's neck, speaking to him in a low tone, as if only for the horse to hear.

"We have been brothers, these many days," he said. "We love one another. Faithful and good hast thou been to me; and I have tried to be kind to thee as I was able. We were friends together, though I was the master and thou the willing slave. I brought thee out of the desert which was thy home, into a strange country; but thou didst cleave to me all the closer, and never failed me. And now it has come to pass that we must part. I who was thy master am so no more. I am become so poor, I am no longer able to own thee. Another is thy master, and thou must love him and serve him, and — and forget me."

He could control himself no longer, but, hiding his face against the horse's neck, sobbed like a child.

Al Borak turned his head inquiringly, and then rubbed it gently against Hassan, as if to comfort him. He also leaned against him, throwing his weight upon him, as though he would embrace him. Hassan patted

the neck and shoulder of the horse while he spoke a few remaining words to him that were scarcely audible. Then, taking Al Borak by the bridle, he led him to Leone.

"This is thy master," he said to the horse. "He will love thee. Love him and serve him as thou hast loved and served me."

Then, putting his arm around Leone, he whispered to him some Arabic words.

"These are the words that the Bedawe spoke when he gave the horse to me. I have never spoken them aloud; and see that you do not. Nor use them needlessly. If ever you are in a strait, whisper them to him. He will then die for you."

Leone bowed his head.

"Have you got them? and will you remember them?"

"Yes, I have them; and I shall be sure to remember them, and do as you have said," answered Leone.

"Now speak the words to him. Speak them softly in his ear. Let me see thee do it."

Leone put his lips to the horse's ear, and whispered the Arabic words.

They were as a spell upon Al Borak.

It was like betraying him; and Hassan knew it. It was giving him over utterly to Leone.

In an instant the proud fond horse was transfigured. His eyes flashed fire; he flung up his head, shaking out his flowing mane; and drew in the air through his distended nostrils as if he were sniffing the winds of the desert; while he stretched out his limbs as though spanning with them the level sands.

"It is well. He will obey you, even to the death."

Hassan had placed the bridle in Leone's hands; and he now turned to leave. As he reached the door, the horse looked on him — a wistful look, almost agonizing in its intentness, and then sent out a long tremulous whinny that was like the cry of a human being in distress. It was as if he said:

"And art thou leaving me thus — I who have loved thee so well and so long? Ah, no, no!"

It was too much. Hassan stopped. An incoherent sound like a groan burst from his lips.

"I thought I could do it," he said. "But I cannot!"

His heart beat fast. His hand went down into his bosom. He drew out the bag of gold.

Then, when he thought of the noble old sheik, and the sufferings of the impoverished people, and the cruelty of the money-lenders and tax-gatherers, and how all the sheep the sheik had intrusted to him were lost, he dropped the bag back again, covered his face with his hand, and went out.

Amne, looking through a lattice, had seen Hassan come and go, and said to Leone:

"The young man who was with thee, and whose horse thou hast bought, Hassan of Bettîr, is he who would have married Hilwe, but for the Thar between his people and the people of Malha. And now they will make her marry Abd-el-nour, an old man who has already three wives, but who has many flocks and herds and other possessions. I greatly feared the young man should see me, and hid myself from him, lest the people of Malha should hear where I am."

Leone did not greatly notice her words, and made her a trivial reply; his mind was taken up with his recent purchase, and the thought of the impression he would make when mounted upon Al Borak. Especially did he think of Miss Warren in this connection. For the fair American, having carried her point, had returned to Jerusalem, as she had promised, and was still lingering there. It was openly said that Leone was the occasion of this, and he believed it — he knew it. There is no doubt that she gave him what most men would consider great encouragement. Flattered by this, he again had been led on into such demonstrations and attentions as were unmistakable signs of his feelings towards her.

It fanned the flame of her vanity to have in her train a titled cavalier of so distinguished a presence. How much deeper were her emotions, we need not consider. Perhaps she herself was not quite conscious of all she

felt. And when she arranged to visit Syria, Damascus, Ba'albec, and Beirut, Leone was included in the party.

It was for this journey he had been so anxious to procure Al Borak. And when, one morning, the handsomely mounted and equipped cavalcade rode out the Jaffa Gate, and turned into the Damascus road, for that long trip to the northward, Al Borak and his rider were the cynosure of all eyes.

They expected to make the journey leisurely, taking abundant time to see and investigate everything of interest,— and there is much to interest. They had planned to be gone a long time. They had no reason to hurry, and they did not hurry. Leone had taken Selim with him for his special attendant. Everything had been made as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances. They were travelling like royalty.

But Leone, afterwards, never cared to refer to this episode in his life.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE reports as to the return of the Palestine regiment had, this time, proved true. Hebron, Bettîr, Malha, Lifta, Ain Kârim, and all the country round about were stirred to their very depths, and sent forth a mixed multitude, composed of men and women and not a few children, to meet the braves — "the sons of the Sultan," as figuratively they may be called — who having completed the term of their military service, were now to be disbanded in Jerusalem.

The day was bright and clear, indeed almost oppressive with that piercing glare which is a peculiarity of the land, and of blinding tendency; and the heat was of that suffocating quality which made people remark that the sirocco had begun to blow.

There were about one thousand soldiers, — with slight individual differences, all generally of much the same appearance and character — short, thick-set men, with

broad and often rounded shoulders, upon which their coarse and rather savage-like heads were so closely set, they seemed to have very short, or no necks. They were strong, tough-looking fellows, accustomed from their youth up to sleep in the open air, — capable of enduring much exposure and hard usage, but ungainly and clumsy in their movements. They evidently were for business, not for ornament. There was something brutal in many of the faces. Perhaps their army life had not improved them. And there too was that about their entire physique — a condensation of endurance, which seemed almost a threat — which said: "We come of an old potent stock, and shall not fail to project ourselves into the future generations."

They presented a remarkable sight, as, covered with dust from their long march, they filed in at the Jaffa Gate, and through David Street, following their red and their green sacred flags, and their tall, leather-aproned axebearers, past the Tower of David, to the Barracks on Zion's Hill.

They were accompanied by a vast concourse, composed of relatives and friends as well as sight-seers. These mostly followed closely in the rear, calling and shouting, clapping hands, and with other exhibitions of wild joy, participating in the eager demonstration.

Some of them ran along by the side of the soldiers, talking to them — asking them questions, and giving them information of events which had occurred in their absence. Others held up their children to show them, — some of the babes having been born while their fathers were abroad. Many a touching scene might be witnessed, the heart breaking down under the strain of its emotions.

Of course the soldiers marched on, of necessity apparently regardless of this, scarcely turning their heads, and keeping step to the querulous droning minor of the Turkish band, which kept reiterating, with persistent distracting monotony, sounds uncanny to the unaccustomed ear, and having the effect of a melancholy jig.

It was difficult for the women in the exuberance of

their feelings to understand all this. It was hard for the men to carry out the part of indifference their discipline prescribed. The youngsters babbled and crowed, stretching out their arms; or, frightened at the strange men, shrank back, screaming and crying, on their mothers' breasts.

On, on, marched the men, and continually disappeared through the yawning doorway of the barracks, which, like a hungry mouth, swallowed them up. Close pressed the crowd, from behind and from the sides. And when the last soldier had vanished from sight, it seemed as if, simultaneously, the entire square was one mass of human beings, so densely packed that one could have walked upon their heads.

Nor is this merely a figure of speech. Here and there, up on high, men, unable to penetrate the crowd, might be seen stepping from head to head and shoulder to shoulder to reach some desired place. The space the soldiers had passed through was blotted out in a flash, occupied by the surging mob of gesticulating peasants and townspeople — the fellaheen and the belladeen, now inextricably mingled.

The windows were filled and the walls and roofs covered with spectators, till the surrounding buildings might be said to be alive with people.

There was a momentous pause, a delay impatiently borne by those outside, in which, especially, a certain process was passed through by the soldiers within the barrack yard, which to those who beheld it must have been a highly amusing if not edifying spectacle.

It is not every day that one thousand men can be seen all at once disrobing, for the purpose of passing from the comparatively modern dress of the European soldier into a garb having an antiquity of four thousand years. Yet this grand divestiture was the sight presented behind those blank walls, beneath the open heavens, in the drill yard.

The Turkish officers stood by, directing the operation, the suspiciously sedate and even grave expression of their countenances occasionallyrelaxing under the provocation of some unusually mirth-provoking incident.

It was more than curious to see those soldiers who had passed into the barracks in their full military uniform, shedding the coarse, dark-blue coat and trousers and red fez, presently emerge in the unconfined fellah garb, the striped abai enveloping all alike. It was difficult to recognise them as the same men. No doubt it was a great relief to most of them to put off the tight-fitting modern pantaloons and jackets, and get back once more into their flowing easy garments, — though the pantaloons of the Turkish army, especially in the case of the common soldiers, are made a rather looser fit than ordinary, it is to be presumed to render them more acceptable.

The meetings and kissings of the male relatives and friends afforded a demonstration such, probably, as is seldom or never beheld in any other country. Only the men are seen to kiss — never, at least openly, do the women participate in this peculiar osculatory privilege.

Some of the poor peasant women had come many miles to meet their husbands, sons, and other relatives, and in many cases had brought food with them to satisfy the hungry soldier after his weary, hot, and dusty march. One old woman had brought a cooked chicken, with olives, rice, figs, and cheese, as well as cakes of bread, for her son returned. They might afterwards have been seen, sitting together on some steps in the street, eating with much joy and satisfaction the simple, but to them luxurious, repast.

It was the same woman who, on the earlier report of the return of the regiment, had said rejoicingly to the Malha women, her companions, that the son of her strength would be given back to her.

As her son appeased his hunger, she kept up a continual chatter, giving him all the news of the village and surrounding country, — and a perfect chronicle of what had occurred since he left.

Naturally they had much to say upon the subject of the feuds and faction fights.

"There goes one of the Yemani," she exclaimed with some bitterness, as a slender young man with a conceited, defiant swagger, passed by, wearing the distinguishing

badge of the Yemani, a white silk turban striped with pink.

Her son, who belonged to the Kais side of the faction, and consequently wore a turban with dark red and yellow stripes, hardly deigned to raise his eyes, much less to turn his head, to look at the man.

"Poor stock," he muttered.

"Ay. Thou mayst well say it. Didst thou note his pale face, not dark and healthy like the Kaiseyeh, and his effeminate air?"

"There is no strength to them," he managed to articulate between his mouthfuls.

"Verily thou art right."

"There is no doubt of that. The wonder is that our side has not cleared them off the face of the earth long ago, and that they continue to come back at us."

"I have heard that they came out of the southern desert, like the locusts and other evil things. But that was years ago; and I know not."

"They come of Shaitân himself," was her son's emphatic retort; "and are of no good."

"They have got much of our land from us."

"Yes; but if we had only half tried before they got a footing, we could have driven them out. As I told thee, they have no strength in them. How could they, with their pale faces? Well may we boast of our darker skins."

"Allah be praised!"

"Is it not so in everything? Thou canst see for thyself. The dark-coloured horses have more vigour than those of lighter colour; the murky and swarthy cattle are the strongest and the best; and thou knowest right well that in our villages the black and the dark-brown cocks have the loudest crow, and lord it over and drive before them those weaklings of paler hue; and the white ones cannot stand up before them."

Thus was quietly settled the inferiority of the Yemani, a widespread faction, which, in opposition to the Kaiseyeh, divided even the narrow limits of the village of Malha.

"But here comes Kadra," said his mother. "Thou

hast seen her already. The same as ever. Let us speak comfortably to her, and offer her a morsel of bread and a draught of the water, lest she turn upon us an evil eye."

Hardly had she ceased speaking when Kadra stood beside them.

"Wilt thou not taste a morsel of bread, Kadra, and quench thy thirst from our bottle?"

"Ay, that I will, at thy generous offer: I thank thee kindly," replied Kadra, as she squatted beside the mother of the young soldier.

"And is there any news, Kadra? Thou always hast the latest."

"News there is," was the reply; "and no good news."

"Sayest thou so?"

"Verily and indeed."

"Tell us it, Kadra."

"Thou seest, over against the castle, those two men of Bettîr, Hassan and the young sheik, Chalîl."

"I see them."

"They have just told me that there is a war in Crete, or somewhere, and that more soldiers are required. The Reserves are to be called out, and there will be a conscription, or I know not what."

"It must be a mistake," said the soldier. "If it were so we would know of it."

"They seemed to have it straight enough. They said the information had only just arrived, and that there would be a proclamation by the Pasha in a day or so."

"Then why did they disband us?"

"I know not, unless it was that thou hadst fulfilled thy time of service."

"That would not have stood in their way in case of necessity. Besides, they have held us already for several moons over our time."

"Then thou mayest thank thy stars that they knew not of this trouble until they let thee go, or thou wouldst not have got off so easily. Peradventure they may even yet stretch forth their hand and take thee."

"It is an evil day!" cried the poor mother, wringing her hands. "Oh, those Turks, how they abuse us! We like not them, and they hate us. They deal unrighteously

with us. They tax our lands and our crops, our flocks and herds, and our trees, whether they bear or not; all that we have is theirs; and then they are not satisfied. They take our husbands and our sons from us, and place them in the front of the battle, so that they may get killed. They put them where they themselves would not venture. Shall there not be retribution for this; and will not Allah take vengeance?"

"There, there, mother. Speak not so loud. Those zaptiehs are listening to thee."

"Nay, my son, I spake not against our Lord the Sultân; that be far from me," the frightened woman hurried to explain. "Thou knowest we are always willing to render to him the things that are his, even to our lives. But we are an unhappy people, through unlawful dealing and oppression; and there is none to speak for us, or plead our cause to our Sublime Ruler, the Padishah."

The zaptiehs referred to were two who stood immediately opposite, leaning against the stone parapet guarding the foss at the base of the Tower of David, or the Castle, as they called it. They were no other than Kiamil Aga and Assad, his sergeant, and they were evidently on the watch for some one.

By this time the immense concourse of people which had filled the square had begun to disperse, each man returning to his own home. The old historic spot which David had captured from the over-confident Jebusite was fast resuming its normal appearance.

The people descended from the roofs. Group after group went by.

At length, as Hassan and Chalîl passed, Assad called the aga's attention.

"That is he, Aga. Is it not?"

"It is he."

"I thought, from the description, I could not be mistaken in the man."

"Thou art right, O most sagacious of zaptiehs! But who is that with him?"

"That is Chalîl, the son of the sheik of Bettîr."

"Thou sayest. Mark him well, Assad. We shall have more to say to him, also. Didst thou not tell me

that it was reported the sheik had a large treasure of silver buried?"

"Yea; it is so reported, Aga."

"No doubt the old man will be willing to pay us a goodly ransom for his son, and to escape our overhauling. What thinkest thou?"

"It is most likely."

"But keep a close watch on them."

"Thou mayest depend I shall."

"Let them not escape us. That Hassan is full of cunning. Remember that I regard thee as responsible for him. I shall hold him, ransom or no ransom."

"He is of comely build, and will make a fine soldier. Didst thou notice his stature?"

"Ay. It is not that I consider. I have other ends in view. He would make excellent food for powder. It is a sin to allow such a man to waste his time tending sheep, or settling down, contented with married life, and the begetting of children, when he might be serving his country by helping to defend her against her enemies. What sayest thou, Sergeant?"

"Thou speakest wisely, Aga."

"Take heed to my words; it will go hard with me but I shall accomplish it. He should be willing to give his life for his country. It would be a crime not to put him where he can be of the most use."

The docile sergeant smiled appreciatively.

"He would make a conspicuous figure in the front of the battle, Aga."

"There is where I should like to test the courage and lustihood of the bulky brute."

CHAPTER XXIX

IT was in the midst of the rainless season, those six torrid months when not a drop of rain falls in Palestine.

The hot, ancient, and malodorous dust lay several inches thick on the streets, roads, and byways of Jeru-

salem and Judæa. One waded through it as if it were a dry unclean snow. It clung to the feet and clothes with a persistency that was intolerable, and made one long to shake it off, in a Scriptural or any other sense, as a testimony against the unrighteous mephitic city.

The day was unusually oppressive — sweltering — seething.

That depressing southeast wind, the dreaded and loathed sirocco, blowing insidiously and unremittingly from off the burning sands of the Arabian desert, like the breath of Tophet, added the last weight of misery, making life a burden. All things shrank, warped, collapsed, and withered at its touch. The heart fainted before it, the brain grew dizzy. It penetrated everywhere, even to the inner chambers, and there was no escape from it.

Looking from the top of Mount Zion, a constant steam could be seen rising from the surface of the Dead Sea, four thousand feet below, as though it were a boiling caldron, or the crater of a half-extinct volcano; suggestive of the day when "the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire out of heaven." So the sulphurous steam ascends. The purple of the Moabite Hills is blotted out. Not a vestige of them is left.

In the narrow tortuous streets of Jerusalem there was scanty comfort all day.

Out in the country parts it was but little if any better.

The ancient high-places, and the exposed rocky tells with their crowded villages, palpitated in the blaze of light and heat, blinded by the glare, hopeless of delivery, accustomed to endure.

In the depths of the glen and wady of Urtâs the hot air, without a current to stir it, lay packed, sultry and still, immovable, and as if full of sullen purpose. In all the arc of heaven not a cloud floated to relieve the monotonous blue. It looked downward upon the earth, implacable, inexorable, like the eye of some monstrous, unconcerned deity who would not help, even if he could.

Crossing the northwesterly ridge, through scrub and brushwood, and by rocky pathways, two men might be seen, coming from the direction of Bettîr, and walking rapidly, despite the heat. They were men of the country, — of the people of the land, — and did not seem to suffer from the excessive temperature as did the stranger and the townsmen of mixed blood; but, like the ancient high-places and the exposed tells, were apparently dumbly accustomed to it.

They were Hassan and Chalîl. The detested conscription was urgently being carried out, and with unusual severity; and both the men had received friendly notice, that morning, that, just at present, they had best not be found in Bettîr.

The reported insurrection in Crete had proved to be true. All the soldiers which could be spared from Jerusalem and Jaffa were at once sent forward; and two regiments, in addition, must be raised with as little delay as possible.

The peasantry were greatly excited, and were resisting with all their might the enforcement of this most unpopular levy. They did not hesitate to resort to the most extreme measures in such a cause.

The zaptiehs, or bashi-bazouks, employed to bring in the men were often unnecessarily severe and not seldom cruel in the execution of their duty. They were, as is well known, universally feared and abhorred by the people.

The feeling between the Syrians and the Turkish Government is far from friendly. There is little or no concealment about it, even in the face of the danger of openly expressing opinion under the circumstances.

The statement is continually repeated, that the Syrians are hated by the Turks, and in war-time are put in the front of the battle, so that few of the men return.

The prejudice was so strong after the Crimean War, the Syrian regiments suffering severely, that to pacify the natives, and in some degree counteract this bitter feeling, and turn aside their wrath, they were told it was the Christians — Russians especially — who had killed their relatives and friends. So that to this day in cer-

tain parts of Palestine the animosity of the Moslem peasants towards the Christians is intensified. The regiment from Hebron having been almost entirely cut off, the feeling of that ancient city as regards Christians is decidedly ferocious and fanatical.

Yet while most positively objecting to leave the country and enter the army, the peasants usually are loyal to the Sultan and Islâm, and quite willing to fight for both within the limits of Palestine, though in general they have but little knowledge of the Moslem religion, many of them living in a state approaching to semi-barbarism.

Most of their manners and customs are peculiar to themselves. These with certain ethnological characteristics and traditions, together with their language, which differs from pure Arabic, would seem to point to a Canaanitish origin. However, they are careful to follow the ordinary observances and to keep the chief festivals of the Mohammedan faith.

On descending the spur of the hill, Hassan and Chalîl found themselves not far from the celebrated "Sealed Fountain" which feeds the Pools of Solomon, and which also supplies the aqueduct which carries the water to Bethlehem, and into the Temple Enclosure at Jerusalem, where, at last, the pure cool stream ascends into the so-called Fountain of the Cup, which stands amid the ancient cypress trees, before the Mosque of Omar, and, with apparent probability, is supposed to occupy the position of the Brazen Laver used for the ablution of the priests in the symbolical ceremonial of the proud old Hebrew worship.

Both the men paused, and looked around them cautiously. Not far beyond the "Sealed Fountain" rose the grey battlemented walls of the Castle el-Burak. Below lay the three wonderful pools, the work of the wise king, majestic, venerable, unspeakably grand, gleaming fitfully in the broad sunshine, as the warm breeze passed over their surface, rippling it into murmuring waves as if they were miniature seas.

They fill the entire breadth of the upper reach of the Valley of Urtâs, each successive pool lower than the

preceding one, and they are separated by massively constructed dams, solid earthworks, running at right angles across the valley, pierced with connecting conduits. Large enough to float a frigate of the line, tradition has it that Herod the Great instituted the performance of mimic naval battles upon them. From the third or lowest pool the water is distributed to irrigate the gardens, farther down the valley, which are believed to be those referred to by Solomon when he says, in Ecclesiastes: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees."

At the present time, the earliest and best fruits and vegetables in the Jerusalem market are brought from these gardens of El Fureidis, — the Little Paradise, as they are called, and which is the very name applied to them by Solomon in his lament.

The appellation Urtâs seems to be a corruption of the Latin *Hortus*, a garden, the name naturally given the place by the Romans, who had here a military post.

Etham appears to have been another name for this place, and which Josephus uses in his fascinating description of Solomon's visits to these gardens.

Stating that the king was possessed of fourteen hundred chariots and twenty-two thousand horses, the historian continues: —

"These horses also were so much exercised, in order to their making a fine appearance, and running swiftly, that no others could, upon the comparison, appear either fairer or swifter; but they were at once the most beautiful of all others, and their swiftness was incomparable also. Their riders also were a further ornament to them, being, in the first place, young men in the most delightful flower of their age, and being eminent for their largeness, and far taller than other men. They had also very long heads of hair hanging down, and were clothed in garments of Tyrian purple. They had also dust of gold every day sprinkled on their hair, so that their heads sparkled with the reflection of the

sunbeams from the gold. The king himself rode upon a chariot in the midst of these men, who were still in armour, and had their bows fitted to them. He had on a white garment, and used to take his progress out of the city in the morning. There was a certain place about fifty furlongs distant from Jerusalem, which is called Etham, very pleasant; it is in fine gardens, and abounding in rivulets of water; thither did he use to go out in the morning, sitting on high in his chariot."

What a vivid burning glimpse of the wise yet voluptuous king in all his glory!

To Hassan and Chalîl, looking down upon the well-watered valley, it was a familiar scene. Since their early boyhood, it had been their habit to cross the hills from Bettîr and visit the pools. They had learned to swim in them. They had played about their margins for many a pleasant hour, mere youths, — before the serious side of life had begun to assert itself for them. They remembered the fruits — the grapes, figs, apricots, and peaches, the pomegranates, melons, nectarines, and almonds — that the sheltered gardens brought forth so abundantly. It was enchanted ground; and they longed to tread it once more in each other's company.

The greater the distance Hassan and Chalîl had placed between themselves and Bettîr, the more secure they felt. It was at Bettîr they would be searched for; and there they would be watched and waited for, expecting their return. They felt comparatively safe elsewhere.

"For that matter we can find hiding-places anywhere," Hassan remarked.

"Yea; and we know every inch of the ground," was Chalîl's response.

"And the zaptiehs are afraid to venture where we would go."

"As well they may be."

Besides, they did not attach sufficient importance to the warning they had received. While partly obedient to it, it did not seem to impress them as of immediate consequence.

The gleam and flash of the silvery water beckoned

like a friendly hand from out the past — their boyhood days, when they had spent so many happy hours paddling in the refreshing flood or playing along the banks.

"The Pools of Suleyman the Wise."

As Chalîl uttered the words, softly and gently, they seemed like a sigh from his heart, — a tribute to sweet memories, — the days that were gone.

"Ay," came the response from Hassan.

Each understood the feeling. Not another word was required in explanation.

"Let us go down to them," urged Chalîl, presently. "We can find plenty of hiding-places beyond; and we need not go near the castle."

"I will do as thou hast said," assented Hassan.

They made a wide detour, and came out below the further end of the first great pool.

The soothing sibilant murmur of the water as it broke against the sides of the pool reached them in a low continuous hum. The vast reservoirs are partly cut out of the solid rock, partly constructed of masonry, and, in places, are lined with the hard cement similar to that used, from ancient times, in the structure of cisterns, throughout the country.

"Hearest thou the voice of the waters?" asked Hassan.

"That I do. It reminds me of the day when we were little fellows, before I was able to swim, and when I fell in and came near drowning, as I surely would have done, had you not leaped in and saved me."

"I remember it well."

"We both came near drowning. You barely were able to reach the stone steps with me. Shall I not always remember thou didst save my life, and at the risk of thine own, Hassan?"

"It seems, as thou tellest it, as if it was only yesterday, and that we still were boys. It makes me sad when I consider all the trouble which hath befallen us since that time, Chalîl. And yet methinketh we had our troubles then too."

As they passed through the brushwood covering the slopes, Chalîl noticed some scrubby little terebinths,

pushing up among it. They had escaped the greedy quest of the goats.

"See the terebinths," he said, calling Hassan's attention to them. "There must have been many oaks here once. What thinkest thou?"

"Doubtless in the days of Suleyman, and perhaps since that, all these slopes and ridges were covered with oaks and many other kinds of trees."

"But that was so long ago — thousands of years ago — it is difficult to understand it. And they say he made the gardens and these pools of water to water them."

"Ay; so he did; and many other marvellous things made he. Is it not written in the books he wrote and in the chronicles of the kings?"

By this time they had passed the second pool, and were approaching the third and last, which was at a considerably lower elevation than either of the other two. It was also at a different angle, corresponding to the curve in the valley. Therefore were the young men more out of sight of the usually travelled way, and they felt more secure.

When they had reached the third pool, they saw that several of the fellaheen were bathing in it. Seeing Hassan and Chalîl, though not recognising them, they called to them repeatedly, —

"Come in; the water is just right. It is soft and pleasant as milk," they cried.

"Strange, how like a frog a man looks swimming in the water," said Chalîl.

"I have often thought of that," said Hassan, "and how in other ways, also, men are like to frogs."

On the great terminal dam, the strongest and highest of all, and a magnificent piece of work, some more of the peasants were gathered, and were rapidly divesting themselves of their raiment, one after another, and plunging from the height into the pool. They, too, invited the new-comers to join them, while those in the water continued their eulogies of the delights they were experiencing, —

"Come bathe in the sweet waters, and cool thyself. They are like unto the waters of Paradise."

"Let us have a swim," urged Chalîl. "It will cool and refresh us for the rest of the day."

The heat, and the sight of the others bathing, made the temptation too great to be easily resisted. Both the friends joined the men on the dam, and were soon prepared for the bath.

They all praised the beauty of the elegant curve made by Hassan as he plunged from the highest point into the water; and they wondered at his diving — he coming up at so great a distance from the place where he had entered.

They thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and all added their praises to those of the former eulogists of the bath, in the extravagant language of the East. It was like bathing in liquid gold, the sun shone down so lavishly, so royally.

A few of the men who had had enough of the pastime, had climbed out, and were running to and fro, on the top of the broad dam, drying themselves in the sunshine, before resuming their clothes; but the majority, including Hassan and Chalîl, were still in the height of their enjoyment in the pool, when a sudden alarm rang out over the water. It came from the men on the dam.

"The zaptiehs are coming!"

In an instant the splashing and the play ceased. The laughter and the voices were silent. For a moment all was so still the rippling treble of the wavelets could be heard. Then a strong voice rolled out the words, —

"Where are they? — Which way do they approach?"

It was the unmistakable bass of Hassan.

"They are even nigh at hand," came back the answer from the men on the height, who were hastily putting on their garments.

"Come, Chalîl; we have no time to lose!" exclaimed Hassan.

They at once swam toward the steps cut in the rock — the same steps where, so many years ago, Hassan had saved Chalîl's life; and now, reaching them first, he helped the young sheik out.

Standing together, dripping from the water, the glorious specimen of manhood turned upon his friend all the

loving pity of a father's glance. With wonderful presence of mind in that trying moment, Hassan, knowing that he would be singled out for capture, had thought out a plan of escape.

"Chalîl, we must separate," he said. "It is our only hope. Thou must go one way, I the other."

"Nay, Hassan; rather we will die together."

"Do as I tell thee, for the love of God! We may yet escape to where thou knowest."

Chalîl felt the agony of the words, and was obedient.

Then, in that torment-laden interval, so full of danger, lowering with the portents of what might come, they drew very close together, cheek to cheek, shoulder to shoulder, breast to breast, thigh to thigh, foot to foot, their hands clasped in the form of the grip of the Great Lion of the Omnipotent Power — in that symbolic embrace and attitude — that mystic acknowledgment of the natural brotherhood of man, handed down from countless generations — from the time of him who had builded these vast pools and the Holy Temple — yea, from the days when that eager multitude, in their proud hope, gathered on the Plain of Shinar to lift aloft upon the face of the earth that haughty Tower whose top might reach unto heaven. This special embrace meant much more than words could say, though esoteric words were not wanting, in whispered utterance.

It all was done at the supreme danger-point — so gently, so promptly, so noiselessly, that the men crowding from behind out of the water, struggling and scrambling upon the steps, scarce witnessed it.

It was the sacred touch of man to man, the allegiance of fellowship, the grip of faith. It gave fresh courage to Hassan and Chalîl, who found in it renewed assurance of constancy, even to the death, if need be.

Oh, the brotherhood of man, how much it means! What happiness, what joy, what exaltation, what devotion, what love!

When they reached the bank and the dam there was a hasty seizure of such of their clothes as they could find. They did not attempt to delay to dress. Hassan, in the confusion, had been able to find but his abai,

and this he had thrown around him. He had pointed out to Chalîl the direction he should take, while he himself took a different one.

The policy of distracting the attention of the zaptiehs by taking different routes was unquestionably a wise one, as well as an unselfish one on the part of Hassan.

His noble stature at once made him a conspicuous object, and he evidently was singled out for special attack, as he had expected. He had gone but a short distance when he found himself confronted by two of the troop, who attempted to take him.

There was a desperate struggle, in which Hassan knocked down one of the men; the other grappling with him, and laying hold of him, while still others were coming up, he left his garment in the soldier's hands and fled from them, naked.

How swift ever had been his feet upon those hills! and now he was fleeing for his life. It were strange if he could not foil those men and find some place of concealment.

Once he turned to look after Chalîl, and saw him disappear from sight, down a declivity.

"It is well. He is saved."

He murmured the words beneath his breath, and with a look of satisfaction, which was almost a smile, upon his lips. He knew that the diversion of attention which he had caused had been the means of delivering his friend.

"Thank Allah," he exultantly repeated; "he is saved, though they should take me. — But why should they take me? Am not I also to escape from their clutches?"

While he spoke with gasping utterance, springing forward with renewed hope and fortitude, there rang out the sharp report of a rifle, and a ball came whizzing over his head, dangerously near.

They had fired to intimidate him, or perhaps careless as to whether they killed him.

He only bounded forward more swiftly than ever.

Yes, after all, he felt he was escaping from them.

He knew of a cave in a certain ravine, a secret place,

a harbour of refuge. He saw it now, as he thought of it, — as plain as if he were looking at it: The huge gray rocks heaving and piercing through the earth, or in savage confusion, scattered around; the narrow obscure opening concealed by brushwood; the solitariness of the region, on the borders of the desert. No one that did not know of it could guess there was such a den there. He would make for that. Who could discover him in such a retreat? He had told Chalîl of it. He, too, would find his way to the place.

How rapidly the thoughts coursed through his brain as he ran, — more rapidly than the motion of his feet over the ground, urgently as they smote it. He imagined himself already with Chalîl, secure in the place of safety. When this passing trouble was over, they could return. It would be but for a little while. Then all would be well.

Thus he innocently reasoned, but he little knew what was in store for him.

He had hardly turned the curve of the hill when immediately he was surrounded with zaptiehs. It seemed as if they sprang out of the rocks and brushwood, or as if the boulders had turned into armed men.

Then began a miserable scuffle, hopeless for Hassan.

He broke away from the soldier who had laid hold of him, and, having dealt him a severe blow, made a brave fight. But what could his strength and courage avail opposed to so many? He was soon overpowered.

Held securely by soldiers on both sides of him, they brought him to their captain, who stood slightly apart, eagerly watching the scene. That officer was no other than Kiamil Aga.

A look of ineffable satisfaction mingled with scorn sat on the face of the proud aga as they brought Hassan before him. He lifted his eyes with an insolent air of superiority, and calmly surveyed the unfortunate young man from head to foot with a stony, unfriendly stare, ending in an insulting smile meant to reflect on Hassan's peculiar condition. Yet every limb, member, and muscle of the young giant was a reproach and a subject of envy to the aga.

Hassan was drawn up to his full height. There was

not the least air of shame or of the suppliant about him. Only at his brow and in his eyes there was a pained expression.

He stood naked before his enemy, — naked in the eyes of man, but in the eyes of God clothed as an archangel, — in the robe that covereth a multitude of sins, — in the wondrous body which the Creator had pronounced good, "the image of God," as the old Hebrews unquestionably believed.

What a beautiful thing is the human integument! How suffused with exquisite colour! How suggestive of the high nature of the royal creature within, the heavenly inhabitant! The naked man, — the son of man, — the son of God. What has he to be ashamed of? When God reveals himself in his work, where is the creature who has occasion to blush? "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" demands the Creator. "Have I not clothed thee in this beautiful robe?"

Standing opposite to each other in such strange disparity, they both continued to remain silent for a space, Hassan feeling that every eye was fixed upon him. But there was no faltering or flinching in a single fibre of the princely man.

In a great treasure-house of art, in the City of the Flower, the Queenly Lily, ever blooming, as she keeps her stately seat upon the Arno, — beautiful, beloved Florence, — in the centre of a noble hall, lifted on high, on an unusually lofty pedestal, all alone, as unapproachable in its magnificence, stands the glorious, colossal David of Angelo — a naked man. All eyes that behold him, salute and admire; for he is clothed with the light immortal, — the light that is divine. And none finds fault. No fault can be found, for in such a presence there is no place for the wicked or the small.

Hassan might have posed as the model for the David.

"Ha! Thou art at last in my power," muttered the aga, after his cruel silence.

The captured man spoke not a word.

"Dost thou remember me?"

There was an ominous and bitter threat in the words, and especially in the tone in which they were uttered.

Hassan replied not.

"Answerest thou not? Dost thou know me?"

"I remember thee well, O Aga!"

"And that day near Malha?"

"Yea. Thou didst speak comfortably and kindly to me then."

"Thinkest thou that I forget thy insult and thy thwarting of me? Besides, I have since found that the woman who was with thee was not thy wife."

"Let me speak to thee, Aga, as one man speaks to another, as thou didst speak to me that day. The woman who was with me was my promised spouse; yea, more than that, was even as though she was my wife."

"Then thou hadst already forestalled me."

"I understand not what thou meanest, Aga."

"No! And thinkest thou not what I shall do to thee, now that I have captured thee in thy high-handed resistance to authority? I might have slain thee had I chosen."

"Kismet."

Hassan replied with but the single word; yet there was a volume in it.

"Kismet! Yea, it is written. And the writing is not to thy advantage. What hast thou to say for thyself?"

"Here I stand before thee, Aga, poor and naked, stripped of all I once had. Yet am I not thy fellowman? Thou wilt not deal unmercifully with me."

"Thou hast no right to expect mercy."

"I only ask that thou shouldst deal with me as thou wouldst have me deal with thee didst thou stand in my place this day and I in thine."

"That is easily said. Thou well knowest that I should not stand in thy place. And it is because thou standest where thou dost, that thou art worthy of condign punishment. Thou art self-condemned, and without excuse."

As Kiamil Aga spoke the words, his eyes once more were turned upon the young man before him. A peculiar influence gradually possessed and strangely moved the captain of the zaptiehs. He encountered those mysterious hazel eyes. They appealed to him. He

could not remove his gaze. He felt himself sympathising with his prisoner. He was drawn to him.

After all, how comparatively trifling was the personal grievance of the aga! How wrong it was to cherish it! And as to Hassan's resistance of the government and attempt to escape, such incidents were of everyday occurrence. Why should he be singled out for especial punishment? It is true he had given them more than ordinary trouble. But what a handsome fellow he was; of what noble stature and grand proportions, and what superb thews and sinews he was endowed with! Why should he hate him? Why should his beautiful body be bruised and punished? What offence had it committed? It would be cruel; it would be wicked to hurt it. Once before the aga had felt this influence. What might it be? Was it a touching of soul and soul, — the recognition of a kinship higher than any earthly relation? Once before he had partially succumbed to it. Now it was stronger than ever upon him. He was ashamed of his severe treatment of Hassan. He began to feel with him in his unfortunate condition, — almost to love him. His hand went out to touch him, to take hold of him, to clasp his hand. He would have spoken to him gently, kindly. But suddenly with a violent effort he recovered himself, he wrenched himself away. The spell was broken. The evil principle triumphed over the good.

Had they been alone, had they not been surrounded by so many, it might have been different. They might have come together, obedient to the voice of nature, which is the voice of God.

"If thou wouldst expect any mercy," said the aga, in a strained, unnatural voice, "thou must inform us as to the whereabouts of thy companion, the young sheik."

"I know not where he is, Aga."

"Thou knowest not! Bethink thee. Where is he hiding?"

"Surely, I know not, Aga. It is as I have told thee. But —"

"But what? Speak and tell what thou knowest."

"If I knew, I should not tell thee. I am satisfied, yea,

am glad that my capture should have been the means of his escaping."

"Take heed what thou sayest. Thou art injuring thyself."

The wrath of the aga was rising to the dangerous point. Yet was there a lingering of the kindlier influence, — the last flicker of the taper's flame ere it leaps back and disappears, lost in its origin.

Hassan held his peace, inflexible.

"If even now thou wilt confess, and reveal the young sheik's place of concealment; and — and if thou wilt promise to cease from all further efforts to escape, and — submit thyself — it may yet be well with thee."

"I cannot, Aga. I can promise thee nothing."

The words of Hassan rang out defiant and clear, so that those who were standing around heard him.

"Then thy doom be upon thine own head."

It was the turning-point. The aga looked towards his sergeant, Assad, who, with others of the troop stood near, and exclaimed: "What use is there of any further parley with him? Ye have heard what he says."

"Yea, Aga, we have heard," replied the sergeant. "It is even with him as with one who knows not his own good, and when he is dealt with mercifully. His fortune is gone, but his pride remains. Surely it is unprofitable to hammer cold iron; and an ass cannot be made a horse by beating. There is nothing to be had of him. It may well be said he has neither property for the court to take from him nor religion for Shaitân to take."

Thus reinforced in his judgment, the aga felt mortified at his former weakness in yielding to his sympathies and better feelings. And now, all the more, did his accursed hate take possession of him. The recollection of his baffled purpose again was in the ascendency, and raged within him. His strongest passion urged him to requital. His unsated desire cried to him.

"Knowest thou not that thy life is in my hand?"

The aga's face was darkened with anger as he addressed his captive.

Hassan stepped forward a single stride; then bent and said something to the aga which no one but themselves heard.

Whatever the words were, they convulsed the captain.

"Kelb — dog!" he cried.

"Dost thou call me kelb?"

"Ay. Shemmel-ni ya kelb — turn to the left, thou dog! Get out of my way!"

This is the contemptuous expression sometimes used by the Moslems when, in pride of power, meeting on the walk Christians and other unbelievers in the Mohammedan faith. It was an intolerable insult to Hassan.

"Then art thou no true son of Islâm to call one of the faithful kelb — as though he was a giaour — a kaffir. Art not thou thyself the kelb, and worse than a kelb; for the dog knows his own kind?"

Then the aga drew his sword and smote Hassan with the flat of it, and made as though he would run him through.

But the eyes of Hassan — those eyes which had looked in the fierce orbs of the leopard — that fiery terror — and quelled it — those gateways of his soul sent forth a power that restrained the infuriated captain.

The next instant, maddened by the insult of the stroke, Hassan sprang upon him. But he was at once seized by Assad and two others of the zaptiehs.

"Take him and bind him securely, and put him with the other prisoners, to be dealt with presently," commanded Kiamil Aga, collecting himself sufficiently to give the order. "He is a dangerous man," he added. "We will scour the country for the young sheik. He cannot be far off."

What if Hassan was, as he declared, under the regulation age, and not yet liable to military service? — his great size and entire appearance were against the supposition; and under any circumstances those high-handed men would not care — would hesitate at no such impediment. They laughed in his face. He was in their power, and they did with him as they willed.

CHAPTER XXX

TO the fellah of Palestine it is like death to be taken from home to serve in the Turkish army. It would be difficult to exaggerate his feelings in this respect, for there are no bounds to them. To the free natural man, with all his generous impulses and ways, roaming at large over his native mountains and through glen and wady, by green pastures and still waters, almost as untrammelled and unrestrained as the wild creatures of the land, — the life of the Turkish barracks is imprisonment, and the irksome routine of military drills and parades little short of unbearable. The loss of his ancient customs and habits, and the change in his diet, and from his unconfined easy dress into the tight-fitting uniform of the soldier, are everyday miseries to which it is next to impossible to reconcile him.

The peculiar circumstances existing in the case of Hassan, and connecting him with Hilwe, only intensified the general objections and dislike to army life as regarded the young shepherd of the hill country of Judæa. He thought with agony and shame of how he had promised to deliver her; and now — now he was leaving her in a state worse than ever.

His desperate resistance had ensured for him a more than ordinarily severe punishment; and, as may be supposed, the hate of Kiamil Aga had not tended to ameliorate this. The jealous captain gloated over his prey, and used him abominably.

Such comfort as Hassan had taken in the escape of Chalîl was of but short duration. The young sheik had been captured the very next day. They were both prisoners together.

"When bad fortune becomes one's companion, he will be bitten by a dog although mounted on a camel," had been Hassan's remark to his friend on their sorrowful meeting.

Yet they could not deny that they were a consolation to each other in their misery.

"Do not be cast down, Hassan," was Chalîl's reply; "I am happier to be with thee than if I were free. Even in despair there are many hopes."

"Thou art right," responded Hassan, always ready to look on the bright side; and, referring to their wretchedness, he added: "Perhaps this very egg, born of darkness and sorrow, may put forth feathers and wings, and become a phœnix."

But in their hearts they felt it was like hoping against hope.

"Were it not for Hilwe and thy father I could bear it well," was the constant expression of Hassan.

Bitter had been the distress of Sheik Abou Chalîl. It was now he felt the anguish and thorough depth of his impoverishment. The village had not enough money to meet the taxes which were overdue, and the payment of the amount of compensation required for exemption from military service was out of the question. Even had the old man been able to raise, by some extraordinary means, the sum necessary to redeem his son, his sense of honour and of right prohibited his taking such a step. Besides, Chalîl would not permit it.

"How could I endure the shame of it, to see Hassan and others of our people go to the front, and I, bought off, remain at home?"

No; it was plainly an impossibility on every account.

The idea that the sheik had a treasure of money buried somewhere in the village had excited the rapacity of the zaptiehs, and was the cause of their pressing their claims all the more urgently, with the hope thus to tap his secret hoard. Such cases of hoarding silver — secretly burying it — were so common, they would not believe the protestations of the sheik, and his repeated denials.

"Come now, O Sheik, and let us reason together," they said to him. "Why dissemble? If thou hast money thou hast no occasion for this trouble, and no necessity to resist, or to lose thy son, or, for that matter, any of thy friends."

But he had been a father to his people, and had not oppressed them; he had ministered of his own means to

the wants of all who were distressed and needing help, and had taken naught of any man, and the terrible calamity which had lately befallen Bettîr had exhausted his resources.

"Think ye that, had I the treasure, I should hold back, and not ransom my son and my people?" was his repeated answer.

But they believed him not.

At last the day came for transporting the conscripts and the recruits, including the prisoners, to Jerusalem, that they might receive their outfit, on the way to their destination. This latter — the destination — the authorities had tried to have kept secret, though it was well understood, or, at least, was generally supposed, to be Crete.

The men were brought into the city in small bodies, or companies, as they happened to arrive, guarded by mounted zaptiehs, and securely fastened together, half-a-dozen or more in a bunch, with stout ropes. They were dressed in the native garb; and, in some cases, the sacred green flag or guidon was carried before them; while, with the hope of ameliorating their lot, they made much ado, clapping their hands, shouting and chanting in a loud voice the praises of Mohammed and the Sultan, feigning a joy which their captive, bound condition and forcible seizure manifestly contradicted.

Cries of "Allah yansoor es-Sultân! — God give victory to the Sultan!" continued to rise from them, though frequently drowned in the shrieks and lamentations of the women, who with the male relatives closely followed them into the city, sometimes to the very gate of the barracks.

Not a few of the men, however, maintained a sullen silence. There were certainly two among them — Hassan and Chalîl — who did not feign joy.

With few exceptions, the conscripts were hurried out of sight of their relatives and friends into the barracks, whence some of them presently emerged, having undergone the strange metamorphosis — the substituting of the soldier's uniform for the discarded peasant's dress. It was noticeable how awkwardly they moved about in

their lately-adopted and generally ill-fitting habiliments. The coarse dark-blue cloth of which these were made was not seldom threadbare and ragged. They were old uniforms for which the officers charged the government as though they were new.

Abou Chalîl, as he beheld his son, captive and bound, and in the hands of the soldiers, ran forward, and fell on his neck, and kissed him again and again. Then he turned to Hassan, and embraced and kissed him likewise.

Lifting up his voice, the aged sheik lamented, —

"O Chalîl, my son, woe is me that I should live to see this day! Helpless to help thee, poor and broken, what shall I say? What can I do? It were well that I had died — that I had given up the ghost rather than that I should live to see this evil come upon thee and me."

"Do not take it to heart, O my father!" said his son. "It will be more bearable than thou dost think. I sorrow not for myself. All my grief is that thou shouldst be left alone, in the end of thy days, without Hassan and me to comfort and assist thee in thy troubles and affliction."

"Allah give thee aid, and restore thee fourfold, honoured Sheik," added Hassan.

"O Chalîl! O Hassan! Allah hath afflicted and humbled me in these my darkened days. The crown of my honour and my glory was taken from off my head. My pride rebelled. I could not bear it. I was ashamed. I covered my head with ashes. I hid my face in my mantle. I hid it from my neighbours and friends and my own people. Little did I think that worse should befall me. Alas, alas, there is an evil behind the evil, and there is a sorrow that cannot be measured, and that the mind cannot take hold of!"

Here the guards stepped forward and laid hands on Chalîl and Hassan to remove them.

The old man, desperate, and blinded by his feelings, threw himself between, and tried with all the power remaining in him to prevent the removal.

"O Chalîl, my son, can I not save thee? O Chalîl, my son, my son!" cried the poor father.

Roughly pushing him off, the soldiers proceeded to carry out their orders. The proud old sheik struggled with them for a moment; then, as they brushed him aside, as if he had been a fly, he staggered backward, trembling in every limb, his brain throbbing wildly.

Futile were all his efforts. He saw the two young men led away. Helpless, baffled, overwhelmed, in the agony of his despair he lost consciousness, and fell prostrate on his face to the ground.

Beholding this, Chalîl and Hassan made a dash to rush to his aid. But they were checked and brought back, and immediately were marched, between set bayonets, within the walls of the barracks.

The venerable sheik, prone upon the ground, bereft of friend and son, was truly a pitiful sight.

Presently one brought word to Yusef, the young lad of Bettîr who formerly had waited upon Hassan and helped him keep the sheep: "Behold the sheik hath fallen upon the earth, and is as one who is dead."

Now Yusef with some others, at an early stage, had been driven away by the soldiers, who had been greatly annoyed and obstructed by the crowd. But on this information he ran to where the sheik lay, and raised him upon his knees, chafing his hands, and bathing his temples with water, which some of the women, ministering to him, had brought.

Under this care the afflicted father soon revived, though he had been stunned by a blow he had received upon the forehead, from the sharp stones he had fallen upon, and which had left a slight wound.

In the East it is rare to find the aged treated with disrespect or slighted. They are generally singled out as entitled to peculiar regard and honour. No one interfered to disturb Yusef in his kindly work, and several offered him assistance.

When the sheik was quite restored, Yusef suggested to him the necessity of returning to Bettîr.

"Certain of our people, overheard by me, as I stood lately by the Jaffa Gate, spake of returning betimes," he said to the sheik. "Had we not better join ourselves to

them? The country folk are departing. There is no place here where thou canst very well stay; and the kahn is overcrowded."

The sheik turned on him a bewildered look. It was difficult for him to collect his thoughts, or make up his mind to leave.

"Chalîl — I want to see Chalîl," he said.

"But thou knowest they will not let thee see him. If thou returnest in two or three days, perchance they may let thee talk with thy son and Hassan, as then they will be in their uniform, and will doubtless be led out to drill and for other exercise."

Others speaking to the same effect, the old man consented to return.

With a heavy heart he passed down the road by the lower pool of the Gihon, words of sorrow and lamentation upon his lips strangely mingled with calls for resignation.

Outside the Jaffa Gate there was an unusual number of camels collected, crunching their juiceless and dusty provender of chopped straw, a scanty amount of barley mixed with it. As the drivers loaded some of them, the discontented animals grumbled and growled and spit, after their fashion.

"Why so many; and whence come they?" some one asked.

"They are lately arrived, and are intending to leave for Jaffa," was the answer. No one thought of their being connected with the movement of the troops, though continuing to remark about them. But the sheik noticed them not.

When he came to the spot where the lepers, both men and women, sat by the wayside begging of all who passed by, the miserable creatures clamoured for alms in their croaking husky voices, and, to excite pity, exhibited the marks left upon them by the loathsome disease.

"Howadji, backsheesh! Howadji, backsheesh!" went up the distressful wail continuously.

It was so horrifying, it almost shut out any sympathy with them — the dread of the abominable thing is so

overpowering. It was like the opening of the mouth of Hades, and letting out the fiends.

The women lepers that are with them too — corruption shamelessly mating with rottenness — they raised their shriller voices.

"Woe, woe! Unclean! Unclean!"

It was the yelping of the damned!

Invisible power of goodness, love, and graciousness, can these be women, — these festering masses of abject misery; this uncouth alliance of the foul and the grimly ludicrous; these horrors of deformed hideousness? Oh, the ghastly terror, the unmitigated loathsomeness of it! The unspeakable, hell-born suggestiveness of the thing!

"How can there be a merciful God, and permit such?" exclaims the unaccustomed stranger, as he holds his breath in passing them, lest he inhale the contaminating, pestilential atmosphere.

And they come together — these accursed and abhorrent men and women. With all that putrid repulsiveness; in the very face of despair, they find an allurement. They produce their kind. And the feet of the little child-leper patter over the floor. And the baby voice, that shall never know joy-laughter, already cries with thickened impeded utterance for a respite it shall never have till the hand of death is laid upon it.

Of course, not one of them is allowed to pass inside the walls of Jerusalem. Hospitals, far outside the city, have been built for these outcasts, where they are provided for, or would be taken care of, and where they should be confined. But they prefer to come here and beg. Even the humiliating contact with the world that this is, they cling to with the superhuman grip of the desperate. And the Turk, to whom the word "order" is untranslatable, and regulation an unknown quantity, is lax, loose, and lenient in dealing with these noisome degenerates. Hence the result. Here and at St. Stephen's Gate, that leadeth down to the Garden of Gethsemane, on the spot where tradition says the first Christian martyr saw Heaven opened, and was stoned to death, are their favourite haunts.

The sheik had seldom or never gone by without

bestowing some gift of food or money upon these unfortunate wretches; but now, with bowed head, he was passing as though he heard them not.

One of the most importunate of the lepers, a great, burly, middle-aged man, beardless and hairless from the disease, rushed forward, determined not to lose the opportunity — indeed, demanding alms as a right. His manner and words implied that the sheik in not responding with a gift was committing an unpardonable wrong. His chest was bare, exhibiting unmistakable signs of leprosy, as did his inflamed and swollen face; and he held up, more threateningly than beseechingly, his hideously deformed hands, from which all the fingers except the stumps had dropped off.

He came unpleasantly and perhaps dangerously near; and his sinister manner was decidedly offensive. His thick, choking utterance was simply disgusting. As he almost blocked the way, the sheik was obliged to stop.

"Poor and wretched as thou art, thou beholdest one still poorer and more wretched," said the sad old chief, in such a tone and with so awful a mien, it struck terror into the leper.

"Allah have mercy upon us," the diseased wretch ejaculated, falling back slightly.

The silvery hair and beard of the venerable sheik, as they floated on the breeze, his strong, commanding features, and lofty bearing, gave him the character of one of the ancient patriarchs or prophets of the country. He leaned upon his long staff, much taller than himself, and which he carried not more to support his steps than as his wand of office. It was the insignia of the sheik's rank from the days of Abraham, who was, himself, naught else than a sheik.

He stooped and plucked the leaf of a mandrake plant which had thrust itself up through the red clay on the border of the road.

"They say a green leaf is a beggar's present," he said, holding it out to the leper. "It is all I have to give thee."

The leper recoiled, not understanding.

"The sheik's mind wanders," remarked Yusef, aside,

to those of their company who stood near. "His trouble has been too much for him."

"Yea; his sorrow is breaking his heart," was the reply.

Yusef gently took his hand to lead him on the way.

"Trouble him not," he said, addressing the leper. "Dost thou not perceive his affliction? His people have been ruined; he and they have been stripped of all they possessed; and his son, this day, hath been taken from him."

But the sheik still held out the leaf toward the leper.

"Nay, take it," he said. "It will make thee potent in love," with sarcastic reference to the imputed aphrodisiacal virtue of the mandrake.

A smile broke out on the faces of the men at the cutting irony of the palpable point.

"Let us be going," they said, and began to resume their journey.

"Allah have mercy on him who begs from a beggar," murmured the sheik, as he went with them.

Many times he had to rest by the way. Then, overcome with fatigue, he would say: "Bettîr is far; but hope is farther."

CHAPTER XXXI

THAT night a sudden and secret order was sent to the garrison in Jerusalem. It was to the effect that the new regiment should be marched to Jaffa immediately. It was at a moment's notice. There was to be no loss of time. They were to set out that very night.

There were many conjectures as to the reason for the order. Some said it was in consequence of information received that there would be an organised attempt made to rescue the men on their way to the coast, which it was intended to anticipate. Others, that there had arisen urgent necessity for the presence of the troops

in Crete. It is true Crete was generally in a chronic state of rebellion; but this was a revolt of extraordinary proportions. Again, not a few declared the action was simply due to the fact that the military governor, wishing to reduce his expenditures, had ordered the regiment out of the country as soon as possible; and that it was cooler and better for the men to travel at night.

All of these reasons may have entered into the causes originating the order. At any rate, in the pitch darkness of the night, the men, awakened out of their brief slumber, were marched through the Jaffa Gate, out of the sleeping city. Without bugle, fife, or drum, unless the latter were of the muffled sort, they went upon their winding and dusty tramp, accompanied by several companies of regulars, and a band of mounted zaptiehs — those ubiquitous horsemen, who might be said to have turned every way — pervaded all quarters to keep the new men within bounds, and prevent desertions. Not till they were well under way, beyond the first watch tower on the Jaffa road, did the grotesque, melancholy music begin. Then the bugles, trumpets, drums, and fifes made up for lost time, blaring out their notes into the night, till the hills and the valleys reverberated.

The next morning, wearied and overcome as he had been by the cruel experiences of the preceding day, Abou Chalîl arose with the sun, and began to make preparations for again visiting Jerusalem.

The men of Bettîr, and especially Yusef, employed all their persuasions to influence him to postpone his visit till he had recovered from the effects of what he had suffered.

"Thou art more likely to have a favourable opportunity of seeing thy son and Hassan by waiting a day or two longer," argued Yusef.

But in vain. The sheik had resolved to set out.

"I am fully persuaded to visit Jerusalem this day. I must see my son. I must be near him for the little while he is here. It was wrong of me to leave yesterday. We should have made arrangements to remain. Besides, I have been warned in a dream, in a vision of the night.

It came to me in the midnight watch, when all was dark and still. Did I not hear the drums beat and the trumpets blow? Yea, the sounds came soft but distinct, borne on the breeze over the hills. And then methought I saw Chalil beckoning to me; and I heard him say, 'Father, come, if thou wouldst see me before I go.'"

The old man paused; the sweat stood in beads on his forehead; in his earnest anxiety he trembled.

"I woke and found it was a dream," he continued; "yet wilt thou believe me? I could still hear the sound of the drum and trumpets, faint, faint, and very distant and fine, like spirit music, from beyond the hills. Thou mayest know that I am determined to go to Jerusalem. Even if it kills me, I shall obey the voice."

Seeing it was useless to argue further, they gave way.

He had chosen Yusef to accompany him, and all along the road he kept referring to Chalil, and how, once more, he should embrace him. He could speak and think of nothing else. He recalled the days when his son was a little child, and he related many an anecdote of him, and told of what a comfort he had ever been to him.

At last they had passed the plain of Rephaim, and stood on the brow of the hill overlooking the Gihon Valley as it curved into the Valley of Hinnom, sweeping the southerly flanks of Mount Zion. Doubtless many a king and warrior, priest and prophet, had paused here for the view before making the descent. The Holy City was in sight, facing them, crowning the heights, the towers of the citadel rising on the left.

"When I think he is within those towers I scarce can contain myself, Yusef. I feel as if I must fly to him, to be with him."

It was astonishing to see the sheik, as he uttered the words, quicken his pace, with renewed strength, inspired by his feelings.

"I can scarce keep abreast with thee," said Yusef, flattering the old man. "Thou art like a young roe upon the mountains. But spare thyself, O Sheik! Thou hast plenty of time before thee."

"Not when I am going to see my son. I care not to lose a minute. Would that I might stay the shadow

upon the dial, or make it move backward, as they say once happened to the good King Hezekiah in this very city — even the same king who stopped the upper water-course of the Pool of Gihon, which is named the Mamillah, and brought the water straight down by the underground conduit to the west side of the city of David, and so into the pool which is called Hezekiah's, as my father told me, and as thou seest it remains unto this day in Jerusalem. Praise be to the All-Merciful, we are not without His help. He will make me strong to bear what I have to bear. My heart is made glad that I shall see my son this day."

So the noble old sheik held converse with his young companion until they entered into the city.

Hardly had they proceeded a few paces within the walls when one met them, an acquaintance of Yusef. With the intuitive mind of the native, the man conjectured the object of their visit.

"Thou art too late," he said. "The regiment left last night for Jaffa."

The words were like a blow to the faithful Yusef. But Abou Chalîl heard them without a tremor. He did not comprehend them. He was absorbed in the thought of seeing his son.

Yusef drew the man aside to learn more of him, cautioning him to speak low, so that the sheik should not hear.

"How shall I break the bitter tidings to him?" he said, when he had learned all.

The sheik grew impatient at the delay.

"Thou art wasting the precious time, Yusef. Why lingerest thou here babbling, when I want to see my son? I would see Chalîl."

The eager, irritable words only further distressed and unnerved Yusef.

They were standing before the ruinous entrance of the great public oven on David Street. Broken stone steps descended into the yawning arched mouth of the dark den — gloomy as the dwelling of Erebus and Nox. In the rear was the baking place. It was a Rembrandt-like interior — a few high lights amid a thousand shadows.

The one thought possessed Yusef — to postpone as long as possible the evil news.

"I find there will be some trouble in this matter of seeing thy son," he replied. "Sit thou here; I shall get thee a place to rest, while I go yonder to inquire; and presently I shall bring thee word."

While yet Yusef spoke, he took the sheik's hand, and without giving him time to consider, led him down the steps into the musty, archaic bakery.

After a few words with the baker, the latter pointed out a stone bench near the mouth of the den, where the old man might sit till Yusef returned.

With a sorry countenance and sad heart the lad went up out of the murky place into the strong sunlight of the street, leaving behind the sheik, who was half minded to follow him.

As he got out of sight, Yusef smote his head and his breast with his hand.

"Woe is me," he said; "I am sorely perplexed this day. How shall I tell this father what hath befallen him? Let me think; let me ponder. He surely will know soon enough his affliction. I do him no wrong if I delay telling him. There too may be some mistake. Chalîl may still be here."

He turned to the right and went up the slope of Zion's Hill, past the citadel, towards the Turkish barracks, inquiring more particularly of those he met as to the facts. The answers he received were invariably to the same effect as the information already heard.

A soldier, sent on some errand by his officer, came shuffling down the hill in his loose slippered shoes and stockingless feet, his clumsy ill-fitting uniform of rough blue cloth, ragged and patched, making him resemble more a scarecrow than a soldier. The tassel was gone from his scarlet fez. Poor dumb Son of the Sultan, it was two years since he had received any pay.

"When I shall get any, Allah alone knows," he had said, sorrowfully but resignedly.

His heavy dull face had little of responsiveness in it. How could it have aught but the reflection of the shameless treatment he had received? Where was the image

of God left in him? He had been beaten oft, and used worse than a dog. No wonder if what his fellow-man had done to him had turned him into a brute.

"I shall ask him; he will know for sure, and I shall let that suffice."

So spoke Yusef, and as he and the soldier met, the decisive question was put.

It was Sorrow interrogating Misery.

The stolid face of the soldier relaxed. The coarse mouth parted to aid in his comprehension of the case. There was the sympathetic click of the tongue and hopeless shake of the head. Then the answer came: —

"Yea, it is even so. The whole regiment marched for Jaffa last night, — Chalîl, Hassan, all. There was not a man of them left behind."

Abou Chalîl sat on the stone bench at the entrance to the bakery. He grew restless and impatient, yearning to see his son, and wondering at the detention of Yusef.

"I am aweary waiting to see Chalîl," he muttered. "Allah be good to us."

The details and incidents connected with the ancient house of bread for a while drew his attention. He watched the people as they brought, on flat square boards, borne on their heads, the dough moulded into cakes of bread, ready for baking. Others were seen carrying away with them in a similar fashion or in collapsable rush baskets and coarse sackcloth bags the baked loaves. The baker was busy the entire time keeping his oven heated and attending to the bread. The peculiar fuel employed by him was, as usual in Jerusalem, the refuse of the olive, which is preserved for the purpose after the extraction of the oil.

The old man watched him like a child as he kept feeding his fire, running in batches of the cakes with the flat shovel or spatula, and, when they were baked to a turn, drawing them out and piling them on one side, in golden-brown heaps, which sent out an appetising odour.

These flat round cakes what memories they hold! Ever since the days when Sarah at Mamre made cakes upon the hearth for Abraham's heavenly visitants they have been the unleavened bread of Palestine. This too

was the bread broken by the Redeemer in symbol of his body at the Last Supper when he kept the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But such high significance as it might possess was all unknown to the sheik of Bettîr. For he knew not the Christ.

Hungry from his journey, the sight and savour of the fresh warm bread woke within Abou Chalîl a natural craving. Yet he thought not of satisfying it. He sat so silent he might be supposed to be dumb.

The baker saw there was some peculiar trouble in the case, and brought him a small cake of the bread. He also lowered a porous bottle of water from where it was suspended in the current of air and gave him to drink, telling him it was from the renowned Well of Moses, from the Temple Enclosure, the coolest, purest and best water in Jerusalem, sold by the shereefs of the Mosque of Omar at a high price.

The fevered old man drank of the water gratefully, and out of courtesy he broke off small pieces of the bread and tried to eat of them. But he swallowed them with difficulty. The fever was evidently stronger than his hunger, and there was still a stronger desire than that of the devouring fever, the hunger of the heart, which required other food to satisfy it.

At last Yusef appeared. The sheik hastened to meet him.

"Where hast thou been? And why hast thou been so long absent? Where is my son?"

"Father, how can I have the heart to tell thee? All our efforts are for nothing. Thy son and Hassan and the entire regiment have departed for the coast. They left last night."

"Tellest thou me this? How canst thou speak so falsely? Hast thou no shame to deceive me as thou hast and to betray me? I must see my son. The officer will not refuse me."

"Verily it is as I tell thee, Sheik."

"Oh, what time hath been lost! Yet, if thou speakest truth, even now it is not too late. Thou mayest yet redeem thyself. Saddle me the ass; we shall assuredly overtake them."

Yusef perceived the sheik's trouble had been too much for him, and had disturbed his mind.

"Thou art not in Bettîr," he said. "And thy white mule and ass, fit for the sons of kings, as thou knowest, O Sheik, are dead! Besides, thou art not able to undergo the fatigue of the journey."

"Thou knowest not what I can endure. Wilt thou not obey my voice? Get thee to a neighbour, he will lend me a beast. But, alas, I perceive my strength and my authority are gone, or thou wouldst not treat me thus!"

"Say not so, honoured Sheik. Have I not promised to abide with thee till the last. And though I cannot restore thy son to thee, I would help thee bear the loss."

"I crave thy pardon if I have wronged thee, Yusef. Forgive me. I know not what I say," replied the sheik, as he went up the shattered steps from the public oven, leaning upon the lad. "But help me to find him."

Once out upon the street, they caught sight of a bin-bashi, or major of the Turkish army, who happened to go by. The old sheik, in whose mind lingered the hope that there might be some mistake, — that Chalîl was still in the city — ran to the officer and, falling at his feet, caught his hand and kissed it.

"I beseech thee, most noble Bin-Bashi, in the name of Allah let me see my son. Salam 'aleikom, — peace be upon thee; thou art too merciful to prevent a father speaking to his son."

The heart-rending cry of Abou Chalîl was unintelligible to the bin-bashi; but Yusef, hastening up, made explanation.

"Ah, I perceive thy son is the friend of the young giant from Bettîr who gave us so much trouble. Then I can only inform thee he is by this time well advanced on the road to Jaffa."

The words of the bin-bashi were a doom. The last hope of Chalîl's being in Jerusalem was gone.

The sheik sank in a heap upon the pavement. His tarboosh and turban had fallen from his head, baring his silvery locks in the sight of all who were near. His lips moved, but no sound that Yusef could distinguish proceeded from them, though his arms were about the

old man and he held the venerated head against his breast, bending close to catch the slightest word.

A crowd of men had gathered. They were kind and helpful, and one of the men found a peasant from beyond Bettir, who, having sold his produce, was returning with two unloaded donkeys and offered to take the sheik home.

As soon as he had sufficiently revived, they placed him upon one of the beasts, Yusef walking beside and supporting him.

"Thou art taking me to Chalil," he murmured.

Yusef had not the heart to undeceive him.

The old man's strength had almost given out as they reached Bettir.

Racked with pain and fever, he lay on his bed in the plain, ungarnished village house, which had been the home of the family for generations; but as to the fact of his suffering, the All-Merciful had cast the mantle of oblivion upon him.

"Thou surely art taking me to Chalil," the bereaved father still murmured. "But go more quickly. Spare me not. I can bear it well."

And they that ministered to him hid their faces for sorrow, and spoke comfortably and assuringly to him, fearing he had not long to live.

Yet the decree had gone forth: "This sickness is not unto death," — though it was many days before the sheik recovered.

CHAPTER XXXII

HASSAN, having made more than one attempt to escape since his capture, had been subjected to the most severe discipline and punishment, in which the element of cruelty was not wanting. Turkish officers, even at the best, and under the most favourable circumstances, are not noted for their kindness or forbearance. On the night in which the regiment left Jerusalem, he

was marched as a prisoner, disgraced, bound, and under strict surveillance. His captain had determined to break the proud spirit of him, and to make him an example, so as to strike terror into others.

Though a large number of friends and relatives sojourning around the city, had received hurried notice of the exodus, and followed the regiment over the hills, there was a gradual falling away; so that by the time Kolonieh was reached, where the first halt was made, comparatively few of those camp-followers remained. Even of these, the greater part returned whence they had come, by way of the valley and Ain Kârim. The village of Ain Kârim, the birthplace of John the Baptist, is in full sight, nestling amid its terraced olive-groves and fig orchards, its vineyards and gardens, distinctly visible from Kolonieh through an opening in the little glen. It is one of the most charming retreats in Palestine, and seemed to invite the stragglers to come back that way. Of the few women who did not now take their departure and return to their homes, there were but two who were not the wives of soldiers. One of the two was Kadra, the other was Hilwe.

After Hassan's capture, with the exception of two brief interviews, Hilwe had failed in her attempts to see him. She had learned of the sudden removal to Jerusalem barely in time to reach the city late that day. Kadra and other women had accompanied her; and as they had failed in their object of seeing the soldiers, who were by that time in barracks, they determined to remain, at least, till the morrow. Thus they were at hand when, in the dead of night, the regiment marched out. Sleepless in their sorrow, they heard the tramp of the many feet, and were among the first to perceive what it meant.

On reaching Kolonieh, Kadra, knowing the desperateness of the undertaking, had counselled Hilwe to go no farther, and advised that they join the women who were returning to their homes. But this Hilwe refused to do; and, seeing her determination in the matter, Kadra had remained with her, thinking that when they had come to Bab-el-wad, where a longer halt

would be made, she would change her mind, and return.

In all her efforts to communicate with or see Hassan, Hilwe had been defeated. This it was which so strongly moved her.

"Had he been thy husband," remonstrated Kadra, "it might have been different — thou mightest have some colour for this; but now art thou without excuse, and wilt become a reproach in the eyes of all men."

But Kadra's argument fell on ears that would not hear.

"Either my body shall reach my beloved, or my soul leave my body to go to him," the hapless Hilwe had answered, in the impassioned language of the East.

"Truly he serves out water with a sieve who argues with one whose mind is already made up. Yet will I continue with thee a while longer, — though thou shouldst be taught if thou dost not know the danger to which thou art exposed."

"Could I but see him to speak a word to him, I would be satisfied."

"Thou canst do naught to help him; and all his efforts are worse than naught. They have left him in a sorrier plight than in the beginning. The caravan proceeds in spite of the barking of the dog. It is as well to admit it. All thy tears are of no avail. What is the use of asking pity from him who has no pity. To his superior the Turk is a cringing hound; to his inferior he is a ravening lion. Dost thou expect to find grass in the market at the end of the year? Thou shalt find it sooner than thou shalt find pity in the breast of the Turks we have to deal with."

So spoke the wise and cynical woman from Malha.

"Thou hast been kind and compassionate with me, these many days, Kadra. What benefits can such as I am render to thee for all thy goodness? Have patience with me yet a little longer. Leave me not. Else there is none to have feeling for me."

Hilwe's eyes were full of sorrow and anxiety, and Kadra made a show of relenting.

"Fear not," she said, taking Hilwe's hand, and leading her down the descent, "I shall abide with thee

yet a while. Who knows? — mayhap till the last. Though thou must remember I have warned thee; and the blame of what shall happen must be upon thine own head."

The night was clear, and the stars shone with unusual brilliancy. How those planets glistened, and those stars, which are suns, burned and blazed, scintillated and glowed on high, bejewelling the firmament with their priceless splendour! — though there were those among the company who, as they halted at Kolonieh, called attention to the fact that the constellation Pisces, which was held to be closely connected with the destinies of Judæa, was surrounded with and partly obscured by a watery haze. The numerous small, diamond-like stars that formed the glittering scales of the celebrated Fishes were mostly blotted out. It was taken as an unpropitious omen, and much comment was called forth by it.

There was now but little water in the stream that ran through the bottom of the deeply-scoured valley, but in the stillness of the night it could be heard chafing in its rocky bed and mingling its murmurs with the rustling of the trees in the gardens surrounding the wayside khan near the bridge where the halt was made. The multitude of stones and pebbles, laid bare in the wide channel, gave evidence that at certain times and seasons a formidable stream must course through the banks. Not far from here is the place where David chose the five smooth stones out of the brook, with one of which, when slipped from his shepherd's bag into his sling, he slew Goliath of Gath.

The halt was brief, scarcely sufficient for a rest; and soon again the regiment and followers were in motion.

Up the heights, by the steep zigzag roads, there was many a weary climb for poor disconsolate Hilwe and the other women. At last they reached the summit of the hills, from which, in the daytime, the Plain of Sharon and the Mediterranean can be seen, and from which proud eminence is a general descent, with occasional interruptions, for the remainder of the way, till the great plain is well entered on.

The abrupt craggy ridges and many narrow valleys, huge masses of gray weather-beaten limestone rock cropping out on every side, present a variety of bold contrasts, perhaps in some respects heightened by the darkness of the night, — grotesque and spectral effects which would, in a measure, vanish at the touch of daylight. It was like a nightmare to Hilwe; and even the resolute Kadra, though sufficient unto herself, and boastfully superior to sentiment, was subject to the spell, and carried her wilful head with a subdued air. But she spoke less of turning back.

Kadra had become, in some sense, a leader with the other women; and several of them besides Hilwe looked to her for counsel and protection. She took a pride in this. There was a wonderful attraction too in the novelty of accompanying the soldiers. There was yet another and a secret incentive. She had never seen the sea. And now that she had travelled so far towards it, the desire to satisfy her curiosity strengthened in her.

"Thou wouldst not turn back now, Kadra?"

When Hilwe, still anxious on the subject, put the question in this form, Kadra admitted the position.

"Nay, nay," she said, "I have made up my mind to continue with thee, as I have told thee. Thou knowest I have never seen the mighty waters; and whenever I heard that foolish Fatima boast of having sojourned by the Great Sea, I always felt it a reproach to me that such an one as she is should have the advantage of me in this thing. No, I shall not turn back."

Yet perhaps a nearer and a dearer reason than any of those mentioned was one that Kadra would not admit: she had formed an extraordinary attachment for Hassan! Yes, ridiculous as it might be.

The next halt, a brief one, was near Bab-el-wad, at a wely, the tomb of a Mohammedan saint, where there is a spring of water — the special attraction — and some fine trees, the latter overshadowing the stone platform and domed roof of the wely. Situated in the bottom of the deep and narrow ravine, with massive rocks towering in perpendicular cliffs on each side, it is perhaps one of the most romantic and interesting, if

not one of the most picturesque spots on the entire route.

The small hours of the morning were already advancing, though still it was night, and darkness reigned supreme in the depths of the rock-curtained valley. The pale gray light of the dawn was stealing over the heavens, from the eastern horizon; and by the time the regiment reached Bab-el-wad the first cold gleams of daylight began to make objects visible, bringing to everything, as in the creative beginning, its own particular blush of colour, of which the night had robbed it.

Bab-el-wad — the Gate of the Valley — has been appropriately named. It is, indeed, the gateway to Jerusalem, through which, for ages, all warriors and pilgrims and travellers by way of Jaffa, whether of high or of low degree, have pressed forward in order to reach the Holy City. Nature has marked significantly the important position. Imposing upheavals of rock, eidolons in stone, rise in defiant guardian crags on both sides of the entrance to the defile through which the road from the Maritime Plain breaks and ascends.

It is, without doubt, a veritable gateway.

What history surrounds this grand portal! Here the Crusader hosts, with kings and princes, and representatives from all civilised nations, fought their way against the Mohammedan power. Here Richard of England — the Lion-hearted — met Saladin in battle. And back in the days when the children of Israel first possessed the land, they and the natives races and peoples, and especially the Philistines, had often encountered each other in deadly combat at this point, at adjacent Ajalon, and along these bristling ramparts. Through this noble gate were hauled the cedar beams for Solomon's Temple, the verd-antique and other precious marbles and materials brought by Herod for the third and last great Temple, and the timbers of English oak which King Edward IV. piously sent, so many centuries ago, to replace the roof (originally of cedar of Lebanon) of the Basilica of Helena, the mother of Constantine — the Church of the Nativity — at Bethlehem, and which oaken rafters still remain there, sound and perfect, to

this day. The Roman legions came and went over this via of vias, as the Greeks had before them. It has ever been the pathway for the delivery of all sacred gifts and all merchandise for Jerusalem landed at Jaffa. The mind grows weary in recalling the honour and the power and the glory, the cohorts, the armies and the cavalcades of all kinds that, from remote periods to the present generation, have swept through this strait and narrow way — between these flanking pillars of rock, of Nature's erecting, which, like immortal gods, have looked down upon it all, unmoved.

How small yet how vast a thing is life! How mysterious! How incomprehensible! These rocks, begotten beneath the antediluvian waters, have endured through it all with a persistency which appals the human being. He envies them for their very obduracy. Yet within the man is the eternal, the divine, the universal soul — God! Fretful man, he walks upon the earth, for his little day in the body, without knowing himself, or the birthright which he has despised and forgotten. He denies a soul to the everlasting hills, and even to the living creatures which he considers beneath him. Often he denies it to himself. He is God; and yet you cannot persuade him that his life does not depend upon a meal of victuals. But, for all that, he has a good opinion of himself; he "feels his oats," and with the aid of his heart, or his liver, or what not, he is able to love intensely and is so conceited as to imagine that his particular love-affair is the all-important question of the universe. Thus, it comes to pass, he is a life-giver, almost without intending it.

The new regiment, with its attendant guards, after leaving the wely, made no pause as it marched through the sublime gateway, but, presenting a picturesque enough spectacle with its outflying zaptiehs, it poured through into the open, as if its officers and watchful convoy had gladly shaken off the incubus of the ravines and dangerous passes and at length found a breathing-space. Here, on the last subsiding slopes of the Judæan range of hills, is another lonely khan, at which the traveller from Jerusalem stops to rest and partake of

his luncheon which he has brought with him from his hotel, while the horses are watered and fed; for the point, being one of the regular stopping-places from time immemorial, it would be impossible for a native to neglect the custom.

The halt of the regiment was made immediately below the khan, upon the gentle slope, where only a few rocks pushed their snouts through the soil. A short way beyond, a spur of the Shephalah, a lower range of hills, fronting the loftier ramparts, runs at nearly right angles across the road, the last high land before entering on the plain; and between this and where the regiment halted is a shallow depression, with a stream, now reduced to a trickling rivulet, or almost dry, at the bottom of it.

Camp fires were lighted, and the preparation of food for the hungry men was at once begun. For that matter, the Moslem peasant is always hungry — always ready to eat. Wake him up out of sleep in the dead of night, and the first thing he expects to do is to eat. The great fast of the Ramadan is, doubtless, accountable for some of this. The man, abstaining from food all day, is aroused by cannon in the night, that he may gorge himself.

So the smoke curled upward to heaven; and presently the fumes of food permeated the atmosphere, — that "sweet-smelling savour," so acceptable to the nostrils of savage man that he fancies it must be equally acceptable to the deity, and so makes the burnt sacrifice a part of his religion.

The laggards were brought in by the zaptiehs, who made it the occasion for a display of their superb horsemanship, which is only inferior to that of the Bedawin.

Last of all, at a safe distance, came the villagers, among them the poor dejected women, dragging themselves along with weary step. At first they did not venture near. But, after a while, they gathered at an overhanging crag, in the rear of the camp, where some of the soldiers were so friendly as to share their bread with them.

And now they learned about their relatives and

friends, and, through Kadra, Hilwe received information of Hassan.

"Yea, he is a prisoner, and under punishment," was the reply to her inquiries.

Further questioning elicited some minor particulars in regard to him, but they were far from being satisfactory.

"Thinkest thou we could venture near enough to speak to him?" was asked by Kadra of one of the more friendly soldiers.

"Nay. That were impossible," was his unequivocal reply.

From some of his remarks the man evidently took her for Hassan's wife, in which Kadra did not undeceive him, accepting it as a compliment.

Hilwe did not dare ask all the questions she would have wished to ask, nor could she prompt them, as it attracted attention to her from the supposed spouse.

"Art thou too his wife? Or — or art thou his sister?" inquired the soldier, looking upon her with hungry eyes.

He had evidently noticed Hilwe's painful solicitude; and her melancholy beauty had appealed to him and touched him.

Poor Hilwe hung her head and blushed, grievously confused, not knowing what to say.

"His sister," replied Kadra, promptly coming to her rescue, and not hesitating to lie in such a case.

"It is well," he said; and, exhibiting his pleasure at the intimation, showed himself not unwilling for further parley and acquaintance.

"Couldst thou take a message to him?" ventured Hilwe.

"Ah, that would be difficult and dangerous work!"

After a short search, Hilwe produced a little ornament carved out of mother-of-pearl. It resembled a star, but was meant for an asphodel flower with its six expanded petals. She looked at it earnestly as she held it in her hand, as though it were very precious to her. She then kissed it. It was the work of Hassan. He had made it, patiently working upon it, during those happy days which they had spent together in their love dalliance, in that garden-nest on the hillside, among the narcissus blooms,

the asphodels and anemones; and the nacre was not unskilfully cut. She had watched him make every point of it.

"Couldst thou not take him one little word?" pleaded Hilwe insinuatingly.

"He is closely guarded," was the soldier's reply. "I see not how it might be done."

But the man was evidently yielding to her influence.

Hilwe held out to him the carving of the star-like asphodel.

"Perchance, in passing him, thou mightest drop this into his hand, and say that she who sent it was near by, and saluted him, sympathising with him, and bidding him take courage."

What depths of love were in her translucent glance! Her soul floated in it.

The man, in his conceit, thinking the love was meant for him, was greatly moved as he took the simple carving. His eyes were fixed on her with more than ordinary admiration.

"If it be possible, I will do even as thou hast said. For thy sake, and out of regard for thee, will I risk doing it."

He would have spoken further, revealing his passion; but just then, lifting up his eyes, he beheld what caused his sudden departure.

"I see the zaptiehs coming this way," he said. "I can no longer stay. But thou canst rely I shall do as I have promised, even if I die for it."

"Allah bless thee for it, and reward thee," she said, as he disappeared.

"I shall say his sister sent it," were his last words.

She was greatly delighted at what she had done.

"He will know his own work," she kept repeating, "and when told that I am near, he will be comforted. Yea, he will come to me."

She felt she had accomplished something by her message, and a load seemed lifted off her mind and heart.

"When he gets it, — if he can, he will come to me. Do I not know he will."

Doubtless the soldier meant to do as he had promised.

Twice with warm heart, but clumsy action, he went to perform the duty he had undertaken, and each time failed to find the opportunity, Hassan was so closely guarded.

"I shall put it off till to-morrow," he said, with the procrastination which is such a favourite expedient of the Oriental. "They will be less watchful then. Yes. Boukra — to-morrow."

That evening, in gambling with a fellow-soldier, he had found himself at the end of his resources.

"Allah is against me, O Murad!" he said.

"Ha, ha!"

The mocking, triumphant laugh of the victor, Murad, rankled in the unfortunate man's breast. What would he not give, at that moment, for the most paltry coin? It might retrieve his luck.

"Try; thou surely must have something left," urged his adversary.

The words were tauntingly said, and galled the fleeced man, who, under that scorching smile of Murad, made the semblance of fumbling and feeling for what he knew he had not.

He searched vainly in several places in his clothing for a single coin of the Turkish or any other realm. The flush of shame deepened on his brow.

At last, thrusting his hand down deep into the pocket of his trousers, he felt there the ornament of mother-of pearl which Hilwe had given him for Hassan. He drew it out. There was no hesitation. With it was a shabby, battered metalik.

The passion of the gamester, inveterate in his race, was upon him. He hardly gave a second glance at the starry asphodel, so carefully and skilfully carved with loving thought in the shell — the memento of those blissful days of Hassan's and Hilwe's devotion, when it was like heaven on earth. He staked it with the metalik,— and he lost.

"Allah is against me, O Murad!" he repeated, with a stupefied expression of countenance.

"And he is with me," said Murad, as he swept the stakes into his pocket.

Thus it was decreed that Hassan never should receive the message from Hilwe. It was a long story made short. And the pearly talisman, carved by the hand of love, and so precious to Hilwe, lay in the bottom of the pocket of a strange man.

Oh, the irony of fate!

That selfsame evening, as Hilwe was lingering near the outskirts of the camp, hoping to catch a glimpse of the one man who filled her heart and her life, and with a vague idea of receiving some result from her message — there suddenly passed before her a tall soldier bound with ropes, driven by two guards who had used upon him the butts of their muskets.

How wan and dust-begrimed was the poor wretch!

That tall man — O Allah! She could not be mistaken. There was but one like that.

He turned as he went by, and looked upon her, in his humiliation. Their eyes met. It was he! Hassan!

Oh, woe of woes — sorrow of sorrows! Has it come to this?

"Hassan!"

"Hilwe!"

The next instant he was lost from her sight in a dense body of troops which opened to let him pass, then closed behind him.

It was like a flash of lightning in the night-time, which suddenly reveals some horrible sight, and then drops it back into the impenetrable darkness.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE lengthened halt near Bab-el-wad had been unexpected by the soldiers, and was a surprise to them and to every one but the commanding officers, who were in the secret and who had contemplated it from the beginning. But the following day the reason for the detention was made manifest to all, when a body of prisoner conscripts, captured since the regiment left

Jerusalem, were brought in. They had been pushed forward in a forced march, and a woe-begone looking crowd they indeed were, as they entered the camp; though, so far as their discontent was concerned, they found there abundant company in their misery.

A further delay was necessary to rest them. But with this addition to its strength, the regiment in due time resumed its march to the sea, the breezes from which had come to it each evening, like a benediction from Heaven. The motley crew followed.

As they crossed the spur of the Shephalah, they saw the vast level of the plain of Sharon stretch before them without a break. Here and there the rolling surface had a billowy aspect; but there was nothing approaching a hill or knoll to disturb its ocean-like character. The plain was a sea, condensed, solidified. It now was of a pale yellowish green, deepening occasionally into a golden glow, but melting in the misty distance into a tender blue fringed with silver, which last, in reality, was the Mediterranean itself.

To reach the level was a relief. Its very monotony had a charm for the people accustomed to the rocky roughness of the hill country. Above all, it made travelling much more easy. Yet to leave the hill country was their great grief, for that country was their home.

Looking backward to the region they had left, the hills rose out of the plain with the appearance of an island rising out of the sea, light hazy mists hiding their base. To the credulous fellah the change was ominous.

In many respects Palestine is of an insular aspect and character. It is an island with the sea on one side, a desert or wilderness on its other boundaries. The desert is, indeed, a sea of sand having its own peculiar storm-phenomena constantly agitating its surface, which is cast up in spray and waves, and in whirling columns resembling water-spouts. It has its navies too — caravans, where the camel, the "ship of the desert," is the argosy laden with its cargoes of merchandise. The mirage-like atmosphere adds the required glamour.

Those simple peasant soldiers, marching to the sea, to be transported to a land unknown to them, what

wonder if their hearts were heavy as they beheld their beloved hills — the place of their birth and of their life — metamorphosed before their gaze, changed till they become as an enchanted island, and finally melt away into nothingness, never again to be seen by them, as their superstitious fancy conjured.

Then, as they approached Ramleh, to certain of the men it seemed as if it were a city starting by magic out of the ground — its minarets, mosques, convents, palms, gardens and fountains, all the work of necromancy.

Here another halt was made.

The reputed home of Joseph of Arimathea, Ramleh, now wizened and decayed, must have been, in former ages, a place of some importance. In many of the little workshops — which are wretched stalls, may be seen the beautifully carved capitals of the marble columns which must have belonged to more than one magnificent building long gone to ruin, and ploughed under. Some of these capitals are of large size, and of the Corinthian order. To-day they are used as horse-blocks, and also are employed as stands or work-tables by shoemakers and other artisans, a single specimen filling the centre of one of those box-like little rooms, where such a glorious antique is assuredly entirely out of proportion and place.

Amid their squalid surroundings, these ancient marbles from some shattered temple, dug out for this degraded use from their necropolis, where they have remained entombed and mouldering for centuries, are a homily on man and his ambition. Crumbling arches, rubbish heaps and ruined walls abound; and the bestained dyer, the busiest craftsman in town, may be seen plying his calling — chiefly indulging in the dark blue colour, so favoured by the fellaheen for their garments — above these quarries of antiquities, these sepulchres of fine carved work.

Thus history is made and buried; and man walks over the silent graves without a blush, or a touch of shame at his petty deeds and trifling thoughts, or the poor transient vexations which rend him with their undue importance.

During the halt at Ramleh, Hilwe had redoubled her efforts to see Hassan and to communicate with him, but without success. Ever since she had sent him the pearl talisman with the simple but touching message, she had dwelt with renewed hope upon the probability of his finding some opportunity for their meeting. She had great confidence in the resources which he ever had been so fertile in developing.

"He has got my message and will come to me," she said.

Even after the sight of him in his pain and subjection which had so afflicted her and filled her with anguish, she did not despair. To be near him meant so much. She could not explain it to herself, but the feeling was there.

She hoped, too, failing to meet Hassan, that at least, through Chalil, they might communicate. She did not know that the officers, fearing collusion and co-operation on the part of the friends, had adopted the precaution of separating them, and that for some time they had been kept well apart.

As for Hassan, the sight of Hilwe had so worked upon his feelings, he was well-nigh beside himself. A species of frenzy took possession of him. He lost patience and control of himself in the presence of such a temptation. As his mind dwelt on the dangers and indignities to which she was exposed in being brought in contact with such rude unlicensed soldiery, it tended to infuriate him.

Chalîl had acquiesced and submitted after his capture, and so had escaped the more severe and cruel punishments administered to the recalcitrant and obdurate.

"You may break me, but you cannot bend me," Hassan had said.

From the first he had refused to promise he would make no further attempt to escape; and to this position, though so unsuccessful in all his efforts, he had adhered to the last.

"Thou wouldst do well to submit thyself, Hassan," Chalîl had advised him, when first brought in from a futile dash for liberty. "Why not promise what they

ask of thee? They will not then so cruelly afflict and torture thee."

But this, Hassan scorned to do.

"I promise them nothing," he said. "Why should I? It is ever in my mind to free myself from them — to escape out of their hands. The dream of the garden never leaves the heart of the nightingale."

"Alas, they have thee in their power. Thy fate doth worsen. They will rive the soul out of thee. And then what canst thou do?"

"Were I dead it were another thing. But while the life is in me how can I cease to make effort? Were I as thou art, Chalîl, mayhap I should have done as thou hast. But how can I leave Hilwe to her fate? My God, it sets me on fire — it maddens me when I think of it. It is true I have failed; but how do I know that I shall not be successful the next time? Although a mountain be high, it has a road to the top of it. Yes, I have failed. One door is shut, but a thousand doors are open."

Now that he was deprived of the gentle ministry and advice of Chalîl, it fared worse with Hassan. He grew more restive and reckless. When they halted below Bab-el-wad, in the region of the Shephalah, his eyes had scrutinised every feature of the ground, searching out caves and hiding-places to which he might flee, and where he might be concealed. He saw with but one intent the brushwood and scrub, the purple thyme and stunted terebinth which screened in dense masses the hollows and crevices in the limestone cliffs. The deep tortuous ravines were pleasant in his sight. They seemed kith and kin — like brothers to him, beckoning with friendly interest. If he lost this opportunity, it might be his last. He was leaving the kindly hills behind. Then would come the naked plain where all was disclosed, like an open hand. There would not be a shelter for miles around.

The hum of the honey-laden bees murmured in his ears; the song of the crested lark came to him lustily, cheerily out of the sky; the smell of the wild herbs was sweeter than incense in his nostrils. They were the

sounds and the odours amid which he had spent his life. The cries of the free wild creatures taunted him. Why should he be bound and driven? Why deprived of his liberty? If to be a slave is to be miserable, how much more so is it for him who has roamed, unlicensed, mountain and valley, with none to question him, or to ask him Whither goest thou? or Whence comest thou? He turned to the terraced heights which in ancient days had been vineyards or planted with olives; he saw the waste unfenced places and the desolate glens with revived hope. They were the gateways to freedom.

"Is not Allah opening a way before me?" he said.

Above all, the glimpse he had had of Hilwe burned into his brain. He knew she was near. Why should he not go to her? He heard her call him, — speaking that one word, — "Hassan," with the heart-breaking accent in which she had uttered it when she beheld him in his debasement, in the hands of the brutal guards, smitten by them while bound, struck with the butts of their pieces. Oh, the cruel shame of it!

"She has the right to call for me," he said. "I have the right to go to her."

Suddenly there sounded in his ears the roll of drum and blare of trumpet; and pouring out of the hillside through that marvellous gateway of the ages marched a body of soldiers. They were in Turkish uniform. They came towards the camp. What could it mean?

They were the captured conscripts from Jerusalem, as already mentioned. Swiftly yet reluctantly they came. The gay music mocked them.

Every eye was turned towards them. The vigilance of Hassan's single guard was relaxed. He pressed forward in the throng to see what the commotion meant, and was carried away with the crowd. The unexpected blast and swirl of sound, all-pervading, dominant, was electrifying, and absorbed the attention of the host.

Hassan was alone.

Again that voice came to him.

Something seemed to snap and give way within his head. A light flashed from his eyes. It flamed at his feet. He followed it.

On, on he went. He knew not whither. No one noticed him, though he walked through the midst of them.

The consciousness of freedom was upon him. He was outside the lines. There was no one to hinder him. He thought he was free. He believed he was free. He knew he was free. He walked untrammelled on the hillside. Where were his fetters? No shackles bound him. His faith had delivered him.

Perhaps, in some degree, it was a realisation, however imperfect, of the divine principle which is all in all, — that within him was Allah, through whom he lived and moved and had his being; that his soul was the life of Allah, — was Allah!

Yes, he was free. Who could separate him from the love of Allah?

The voice of voices had come to him, echoing down the spiritual heights that know no time or space, but yet through centuries — almost two millenniums — of human sound, as men count: "Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul!"

It seemed to him as if he had heard the words long ago, — as if they told him something he already had known or ought to have known, — as if they were a sacred reminiscence of an earlier existence. The sense of freedom filled him as never before. He walked as a new man, allied to all the heavenly powers, and in the exultation of his freedom he was glad.

O Liberty, divine angel from heaven, woe be to the man who attempts to clip thy glorious wings and bind thee in the dust! Happy is the people upon whom thou smilest, and blessed the nation with whom thou dwellest. Daughter of God, no wonder that men, recognising in thee the likeness and image of the Most High, fall prostrate and worship.

It was but a short time before an alarm was raised. The guards turned out. Hassan was soon surrounded and brought back. In the brief interval he had searched in vain for Hilwe. He had not even caught a glimpse of her. Nor had she seen him.

On this occasion the guards were incensed against him, and in their exasperation used him unmercifully. They

struck him, they mocked him, they swore at him, setting him at naught, and in other ways abused him.

"Allah ylaano, — God d—n you," cried the soldier who had been left in charge of him, with a profanity quite equal to that of the Occidental, — for it is altogether incorrect to suppose there are no oaths or swearing in the Arabic or among the Orientals. "Didst thou think to escape me? Why give me this trouble? Wouldst thou spit towards heaven?"

They bound him more securely, which meant more painfully, than before, and drove him in before them as they would have driven a donkey or other beast.

"Istaagel — Hurry up," they cried, as he stumbled and fell.

"Id-roub-hou, — beat him."

"He is lazy."

"Give him a touch of the kourbaj."

They did not hesitate to lay upon him their heavy whips, such as the zaptiehs carry.

"Art thou not a fool to think thou couldst outwit us and get away?" they yelled.

"He endeavours to extract oil from sand," another mockingly added.

To most of this abuse Hassan replied nothing. He seemed stupid, overwhelmed at his repeated failures. Yet was there a strange, enrapt expression about him which puzzled them. They could not understand his immense power of endurance. It angered them.

"What aileth thee that thou attemptest the impossible?" they asked. "We shall hang thee by the wrists till thy nails drop off."

Once he replied in a dazed way to their taunts: "In the time of necessity, when there is no chance of escape, the hand will lay hold of even a sharp sword by the blade."

This was received with shouts of derision.

"There, — you see what he is."

"He understands not his own good," said one.

"He is insane," quoth another.

"What doth an ass know of the value of saffron?" contemptuously remarked the first guard.

"Yea," assented a stout little soldier, the very antipode of Hassan, and therefore calculated to appreciate inimically his excessive proportions. "What can you expect from such as he is? That only leaks from a vessel which it contains."

It was like the ass kicking his heels in the face of the expiring lion.

Bound and bent and exhausted from their abuse, the noble frame of the young giant of Bettîr lay prostrate at their feet. They had fastened his arms behind his back. His legs were fettered. He was at the mercy of his tormentors. They had dragged him far inside the lines, where there was no hope of his escaping.

"Let him alone now," said one of the officers on coming up and seeing his state; "he has to march to Ramleh. He has had enough for the present. When we get there, we shall have another halt, and we can give him thorough punishment then, or when we reach Jaffa."

After this, they took extraordinary precautions in guarding Hassan; and so it was that all Hilwe's hopes of seeing him at Ramleh were disappointed, and all her attempts to communicate with him were frustrated.

Not only at the various halting-places, but all along the route the officers had continued to drill the men, and put them through the ordinary evolutions; so that by the time Jaffa was reached they had acquired a proficiency in this direction which, considering the circumstances, was highly creditable.

More weary than ever, perhaps largely because less hopeful, were the two women from Malha, who followed far behind, foot-sore and heart-sore, drifted hither and thither by every changing circumstance, — yet, in their greater trouble, heedless of their lesser misfortunes.

Kadra, seeing the pitifulness of Hilwe's condition, refrained from noticing it to her. She spoke as cheerfully as her own unhappy state would permit.

"Truly 't is a weary way, Hilwe," she said; "yet every step we take brings us nearer to Jaffa."

"And then the sad end," returned Hilwe. "But if I see him to speak to him once more —"

"Yea, if thou couldst speak to him once more, thou wouldst be comforted."

The other women of the company paid but little attention to them, being absorbed in their own sorrows.

"Yea, if I but see Hassan, face to face, I shall be satisfied," Hilwe, along the dusty highway to Jaffa, kept murmuring to herself, in that inward voice that is the heart's register.

Love, that greatest of all things, sustained her.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"REST thee, rest thee. Thou art sick unto death, Hilwe; and thou hast given thyself no peace since we reached Jaffa."

"How can I take rest, or have any peace? They are not for such as I am."

"Thou hast done what thou couldst to find him. If thou hast failed, it is not thy fault. Besides, he must have got thy message. And Chalîl must be with him. Lay thy head in my lap, Hilwe, and take a little sleep. Have mercy upon thyself, or thy life will go out."

"How can my eyes slumber or sleep, and how can I take comfort when I consider that Hassan may at this very moment be in torment, — or perhaps dying, or dead; or may shortly be carried whither I know not, and where I never shall be able to see him? The transports have come. They may take him away to-morrow. O Kadra, I have cried to Allah in the daytime, and he has heard me not, and in the nighttime, and he has answered not! Woe is me! He hath added grief to my sorrow. I am faint from sighing, and I find no rest. I am but a woman; I have no prayers that are acceptable to him, as have the men. Yet in my heart have I besought him that he would have compassion."

"O Hilwe, thou wilt weep the eyes out of thy head! Heed what I speak to thee, and have pity upon thyself, else thou wilt not be able to sustain that which is coming

upon thee. Thou sayest we women have no prayers as have the men. It is true. The Khateeb doth not teach us as the Kasees doth the Nazarene women. Yet, though we have not been taught the prayers of our Prophet in the Koran — praised be his name! — I am persuaded there is that within us which Allah doth not despise. Is he not the Most Merciful? Is not his pity over all things? He knows that we poor women have no help but from him. He knows we have not been taught. Our prayer is like the cry of the wild things on the hills. Therefore the speechless voice of the heart reaches him sooner than the loudest prayers. Dost thou believe me?"

"I will try to believe thee, Kadra; I must, I must!"

"Then come hither. Let me break with thee this morsel of bread. And see, I have filled my water-bottle with pure cool water, freshly brought up, by the wheel yonder, out of the ground."

Kadra drew Hilwe aside under the shelter of a wide-spreading olive-tree, on the border of an extensive orange-grove, the proprietor of which had allowed her to help herself to the clear sparkling water raised in such glorious abundance by the sakieh or na'ura. This machine, known in the Spanish as *noria*, and in many respects similar to that of Spain and to the ancient Persian water-wheel, is a wooden wheel with swinging, reversible earthen vessels attached, which, as it revolves, empties their contents into a great stone tank, from which the water is distributed, in branching cement-lined conduits, to all parts of the grove and gardens. This is the method of irrigation employed in the celebrated orange-groves and gardens at Jaffa, where water is found in surprising quantity only a few feet beneath the sandy soil.

Kadra, with kindly tact, had called Hilwe's attention to their remarkable surroundings, hoping to relieve the poor girl's mind from the severe strain and heavy burden which oppressed it. From where they sat, they could hear the creaking of the wheel and splashing of the water, and, through the branches of the orange-trees, caught glimpses of the ox and ass — the simple

motive power — as they went their monotonous round, the unconscious origin of the force.

The calm, benignant air was saturated with tropical fragrance, affording that fulness of satisfaction and assurance of peace and quiet which is indescribable. The allied aroma of orange, citron, lime and lemon, and the perfume of thousands of cultivated blossoms of the parterre mingled with the sweet breath of the yellow-flowered acacia, sometimes known as the opoponax, and which thorny shrub, planted with the prickly pear cactus of enormous size, formed dense impenetrable hedges on each side of the narrow lanes and roads, protecting as effectually the wide plantations of the golden fruit as did the enchanted dragon the fabulous gardens of the Hesperides.

A sea-like expanse of orange groves surrounded the spot where the two women sat. Amid the lustrous green of the leaves and the silvery bridal blooms shone a lavish wealth of the golden globes, each an auriferous world in miniature. At frequent intervals groups of the date palm lifted their stately tapering trunks, crowned with broad feathery leaves, high in air, with saintly assurance. These great branchy leaves were the trophies of the victor — given to him that overcometh; and they seemed conscious of their ancient honour. Beneath their gently swaying curves tenderly outlined against the cloudless blue of the sky, to which they are akin, sumptuous clusters of the date-fruit, some crimson, some honey-yellow, hung in generous profusion. That fine far-off deeper blue is the Mediterranean itself, the great sea, across whose sapphire background may be detected the sunny gleam of flitting sails, — while, seated on her mount of rock and sand, crouching at the water's brink, with many a dome and pinnacle and suggestive minaret, Jaffa, the quaint old town, which tradition says was founded before the Deluge, looks down with jealous pride upon the whole entrancing scene. No wonder that Kadra, catching sight of the breezy, crispy blue of the sea, under the unwonted spell, was carried away with the rare splendour of it.

"O Jaffa — Yafa — 'the beautiful,' as well thou art

named, thou art even as the Eden that Allah planted for the first man and woman."

She tried thus to rally Hilwe, and coax her out of her grief into admiration of the place, but in vain.

"I know it is fair and excellent," she replied; "but" — she shook her head sadly — "it cuts me to the heart, Kadra, when I think of Hassan."

She hid her face against Kadra's bosom, weeping bitterly.

Kadra herself broke down, and mingled her tears with those of the sorrowing girl.

"Would to God we saw it with a happy heart," sighed the pitying woman, folding Hilwe in her arms.

"Ah, would it were so!"

"Yea, Hilwe; thou art right; the beauty of the garden is enjoyed by him whose mind is at ease."

"I see not the roses for the pain of the thorns. I can give myself no rest, nor take any peace till I have found him."

"Alas, in a world like this, one must be under obligation to a hundred thorns for the sake of one rose," mused Kadra.

Afterwards both the women, for heaviness of heart, were silent for a long time. Then Hilwe roused herself.

"Art thou rested, Kadra," she asked in a soft voice.

"Yea, as much as I shall be," returned the brave woman.

"Then let us be going."

"Ah, I knew where thy mind was! Truly I am ready. It cannot be but that this time we shall find him."

That night, as they were slowly and sadly returning, weary and dispirited, from another fruitless effort to reach Hassan, they wandered out of their road, and became utterly bewildered in their attempts to find the way. The darkness that had quenched the scarlet of the pomegranate blossom filled the whole breadth of the firmament with blazing, palpitating, starry suns that chanted with unceasing voice their unheeded prophecy to man.

"More worlds! more light! more life!" they cried, as they had done for centuries of millenniums, even before

that epoch when the earth was formless and void, and blackness was upon the face of the vague abysm.

It is a glory and a horror — too much for the poor human heart. And yet man staggers on because he must, looking up occasionally.

Many a time did Hilwe stumble. But it was more from exhaustion than from obstacles encountered in the darkness. And the dimming blur or mistiness which hid or obscured from her the nearer surrounding objects was not caused by the condition of the atmosphere, but by the tears which filled her eyes.

The too sweet breath of the orange groves was heavy to oppressiveness in the night. The sighing of the breeze was like the whispering of mystic voices, warning, pleading. The strange and awful shapes assumed by the trees and other natural forms in the imperfect light filled both the women with superstitious horror.

They heard the challenge of the pickets. Just then a soldier passed near them. They lay low till he had gone by, and then resumed their tramp with dread.

"It is plain," said Kadra, "we wander more and more out of the way. When one is in trouble he becomes bewildered and silly, and goes round and round, following not a straight course, till he is bewitched and lost."

"Then we are lost," said Hilwe. "Thou dost not know where we are."

"It is even so," admitted Kadra. "But what wonder? Wandering about in the night, worse than that might easily have befallen us. The jinns — the evil spirits — are abroad to do mischief on such occasions as this."

As she spoke they heard a doleful sound as of some one in distress and groaning. This added to their alarm.

"Hearest thou that?" asked Hilwe in a low voice.

"Ay. Did I not tell thee?"

Involuntarily turning their eyes, though with much foreboding, in the direction of the sound, they beheld what terrified them still more. They saw, not twenty paces off, what seemed the form of a man with outstretched arms, fastened to a crooked, distorted tree. Lifted up against such scant and scattered light as still lingered in the western sky, the strangely exposed body,

to their affrighted vision, had a preternatural aspect and almost gigantic proportions.

In her delicate, feeble, and weary condition, Hilwe, perhaps less courageous than Kadra, had hardly trusted herself to cast more than a momentary side glance at the fearful object. It was enough. Her imagination did the rest.

The horror of the superstitious in the presence of what they suppose to be the spectral or supernatural, is not easily measured. Even steadfast minds, as well as those who deny the existence of spiritual agencies and the Supreme Being, have been known under the pressure of some unwonted ordeal, to give way in this direction. With their peculiar belief as regards spirits, afreets, jinns, gnomes, and all the ghostly paraphernalia connected with the unseen or unknown world, the peasants of Palestine are exposed in an unusual degree to the susceptibilities thereby engendered. Those imponderable creatures of the air are to them very real existences of everyday conversation. They are feared, are the subject of prayer, and are guarded against by numerous well-known precautions, and the employment of various devices in the shape of spells, talismans, and amulets innumerable. That other world, not far from any of us, is very near these simple people. But it is the malign side of it that has the strongest hold on them. They feel the wings of those unfriendly phantoms brush them in their unholy flight, hear their passing voices, sometimes see their fearful shapes, and regard them unquestionably as agents of Iblees, the Evil One.

The two women remained spell-bound, trembling with fear, not daring to move from where they stood.

"It is a ghoul who has assumed this shape in order to lure us to destruction," whispered Kadra. "Be careful, Hilwe. Do not stir or make any noise, lest we attract his attention."

As she spoke she drew through her fingers the blue bead suspended from her neck, regarded as a potent fetich to ward off disaster — especially the "evil eye" — and repeated inaudibly some pagan form of incantation.

Hilwe bowed her head, but uttered not a word. An

inexpressible, unaccountable awe thrilled her. Her heart beat fast with an undefined mingling of ecstasy and pain. She knew not what it meant. The stillness and the gloom, and the pervading odours from the orange groves and hedges of opoponax were more oppressive than ever. The very air and the darkness weighed upon her as a burden. But the life leaped strong within her, in sympathetic recognition.

Again came that agonizing groan of weariness and distress. How strangely it moved her!

Then she heard a voice — a man's voice and words:

"O Allah, Allah! Hast thou forgotten me? Wilt thou leave me to perish?"

The cry went to her heart. It was as the voice of her life! A cry out of the infinite! Soul calling unto soul!

She sprang forward, raising her eyes without fear or hesitation to the figure so cruelly bound upon the tree.

She knew it! Ah! did she not? She knew, for she loved every atom of that tortured body. He had saved her from the dark waters. She had lain in his bosom. He had given her life. He was her all.

"Merciful God, it is Hassan!" she cried.

The next moment she was beside him.

She bent herself beneath his feet, to relieve the tension upon his strained and outstretched arms.

"My Hassan! My Hassan!"

She embraced and fondled the sacred knees. She kissed the precious feet. Oh, the pity and the love!

His head had fallen forward on his chest. Sorrow and pain had drunk the light out of his glorious eyes, now languid and sunken; yet still they looked into her eyes with the love that is immortal — that is the lord and giver of life. It seemed a last effort.

Both head and feet were bare. His ghastly face was stained with the blood which flowed from a wound on his brow. The hair of his head and face were matted with it. His torn and scanty garments, far from sufficient to cover him, and half stripped from him, the result of many a desperate struggle, were splashed with the same red stream. The great thews and sinews of the man, his muscular force, his inveterate power — the majestic

beauty of his entire body, broke through the rents and the scraps and patches of the miserable raiment that could not conceal or degrade him, and manifested themselves despite the soiled and ragged fragments of the poor and shabby uniform into which his guards had thrust him.

All the exalted pity of the woman's nature arose in desperate rebellion at the sight.

"Alas, my Hassan, that I should have sought thee to find thee thus!"

But though she spoke to him so tenderly, so softly, within her was gathering the concentrated rage of a fury. She seized the ropes that bound him, and tried to loosen or break them. She tugged at the knots with her teeth, to undo the shameful bonds and release him.

When Kadra came up, she eagerly assisted in the work.

But knots fastened in this country, and especially with such a purpose, are not easily unloosened; and the women made but little progress.

"The knots are accursed, and so be those who made them," vociferated Kadra, in her wrath.

They searched in vain for something to sever them with.

"Thou wilt have to leave me to my fate, Hilwe. The guards will soon return, and find thee; and then —" As Hassan feebly spoke the words, the damp as of death was on his brow. "I would rather die — I would rather see thee dead than see thee in their hands."

Called away by some sudden alarm, the soldiers in charge of him, having bound him with unusual care, suspending him by the wrists, had confidently left him alone, intending shortly to return. They had evidently been detained longer than they expected. Thus Hilwe and Kadra had found him.

"Keep courage, Hassan; we shall do our best to relieve thee," replied Hilwe, redoubling her exertions.

"Yea, we shall not cease till we release thee," added Kadra.

"Surely the knife has reached the bone," he said in his agony. Then, in a paroxysm: "What am I thinking

of? and what does Allah intend? I cannot let thee stay. Thou art in grievous peril."

At last they had loosed the knots which suspended him by the wrists to that abhorrent contorted tree.

"Truly it is as accursed as it is crooked!" said Kadra.

Slowly and carefully they lowered the body, Hilwe receiving it in her arms. Every movement was torture to him; but not a groan escaped his lips. Was he not in the arms of his beloved?

The glorious being, in all his grand proportions, late replete with manly force — like one of the young gods in his strong vitality — now helpless as an infant, lay stretched upon the ground. He seemed larger than ever — more than ever to Hilwe, who supported his head upon her bosom, her face pressed to his. The supreme joy of having him usurped every other feeling for the moment. All he had suffered made him tenfold dearer to her. Their tears mingled.

"I scarcely dare tell Hilwe," murmured Kadra; "but, unless certain help is given, the pangs of death are upon him, or I am mistaken. Not one in a thousand could stand what he has gone through, and live. Yet must we do what we can to save his life, and not despair."

She gave him water to drink, while Hilwe chafed his hands. This revived him somewhat. The great soul-full eyes turned to thank them. Kadra, who had no little knowledge of herbs and the simple remedies of the country — hence her surname of "wise woman" — hastened to apply certain of them which she was usually provided with. She bathed and dressed his wounds with the coolness, assurance, and considerable of the skill of the hakîm — or regular physician — the Arabic word for doctor being synonymous with "wise man." She evidently craved to take possession of him, and minister to him. It was part of her nature. And Hassan submitted to it, as if he were a child, without a question, or a thought of impropriety.

"Truly I may say my body is full of wounds," he said; "where shall I apply a plaster?"

But, with all her show of stoicism, Kadra was full of sympathy for him. Indeed, it may as well be admitted,

her feeling for him was one of love. Nor was this of a day's growth, though only of late had she recognised it.

The tears filled her eyes as she bathed his wounded head, his lacerated back, and the welts that scored his loins.

"No wonder that there is not left even a sigh in his heart," she said.

The peculiarities of the marriage relation under Mohammedanism are such as permit on the part of the man of a division of the heart to an extent unknown to, or at least not openly acknowledged in Christian countries. Kadra's love for Hassan would have been ludicrous had it not been pathetic. At any rate, as it was totally unreciprocated, it was not such as to make Hilwe jealous, or the least uncomfortable.

"It is strange. He does not think of me that way," Kadra would say musingly.

Yes, Hassan's indifference towards her was among the unaccountable things to Kadra — as, no doubt, he was a "true believer," she reasoned, and naturally quite as capable of dealing with the subject as was any other son of Islâm. Besides, she considered he had shown some preference for her. She recalled his present to her of the sheep, and other more delicate if less tangible attentions in the shape of expressed admiration and goodwill, and innumerable compliments. They had not brought the desired result, it is true. Yet still they remained facts. And facts are stubborn things.

In this she had not the least intention of encroaching on Hilwe's rights and prerogatives; and, as we have seen, both the women remained the best of friends.

"The law allows the man four wives and many concubines," Kadra would say ruminatively, and with an aggrieved spirit.

But it did not enter Hassan's head that the "wise woman," of grotesquely grim aspect, had any serious intentions towards him matrimonially. Neither did such an idea enter Hilwe's brain. How could it? Nor did the fact of her love in any sense detract from the kindly spirit and ministrations of the elder woman, assigning them to a selfish motive. If her heart had betrayed her,

and carried her further than she intended, she was not to blame. She could not help it. Her secret was her own. There was no sin in it.

Kadra's healing touch was in this case the touch of love. Therefore it should have carried twice the potency. It seemed efficacious with Hassan. Life, while sometimes as transient as a vapour, has, again, a tenacity that exceeds expectation; and the vitality lodged in the stalwart young shepherd was of no doubtful or evanescent sort, though the body had been put to such an extreme test, it had scarce power to retain it.

The passionate nature of the man was not without its influence.

"Art thou better?" asked Hilwe anxiously.

"Yea," he replied. Then, as if in contempt of his weakness, he added: "When the heart has become faint it ought to be removed from the breast."

"Say not so, Hassan," she said, shaking her head sadly.

"When a man's strength is gone, Hilwe, of what use is he? He is not fit to live."

"Ah, my Hassan, if only I had thee with me, I would soon nurse thy strength back to thee! But — but they will take thee from me."

Hilwe burst into tears and was unable to proceed.

Hassan too was silent. Then, with a choking sob, he said:

"Alas, my Hilwe, what a number of desires have come to naught! Little did we think, that happy day, in the paradise on the hillside, that this should be the end. I, who should have been thy comfort and stay, am helpless, and unable to defend thee. How can I leave thee to thy fate? It was the thought of that made me desperate. I broke away from them, again and again. But the very stars in the heavens were against me. Did I not see our stars — the Palestine cluster — the glittering Fishes of the East — blotted out with watery haze? I might have known. They were turned from me. I was unfortunate from the beginning."

"It is I who have brought all this trouble upon thee.

Had it not been for me thou wouldst have submitted peaceably."

"Rather it is I who have brought trouble upon thee, Hilwe. Yet what is the use of lamenting that which is done, and cannot be recalled? And now, Allah help thee and me, I must bid thee farewell, and beseech of thee to leave me. The guards may return at any moment."

"O Hassan, I cannot — I cannot go!"

"Hark! What is that sound? Methought I heard approaching steps. Perhaps it is the pickets. We must speak softly not to attract attention. It even is with us as with the jackal, — his cry when in trouble is his greatest misfortune, for it discovers him to his enemies. We cannot give voice to our grief, Hilwe. We must bear it without lamentation."

"There is no voice left in us," said Kadra. "We have poured out our souls with weeping. We promise we shall make no noise of lamentation. And suffer us now to remain with thee to the end, or, at least, till the guard comes. We would not be ignorant of what happens to thee."

Thus adding her importunities to those of Hilwe, Hassan could no longer contend with them, but of necessity and inclination gave way, though much against his judgment.

"And thou wilt stay, Hilwe?" he said.

"Yea, I will stay. They may take thee from me, but I shall not leave thee."

Hilwe threw herself into his arms, and wept upon his breast as a sorrowing child weeps upon the mother's bosom.

"Wilt thou break my heart, Hilwe? Alas, alas! How shall I console thee? Bismillah, let me kiss thee once more, my beloved." His voice faltered. He could scarce proceed. "This is our farewell. Allah be kind to thee this dark night and for evermore; and may he watch between thee and me — when we are parted."

Kadra, whose soul was torn within her, had withdrawn some time previously, out of sight and hearing,

into the deeper shade, where she flung herself behind a tree, sobbing bitterly.

"Ay, leave them to themselves," she had said, addressing herself. "No one may intermeddle with a grief like theirs. Do I not know how it is?"

"I am troubled, and greatly fear for thee, Hilwe," Hassan continued. "I may not tell thee."

Again and again he pressed her in his arms, soothingly.

"Fear not for me," replied Hilwe bravely. "I think not of myself. All my fears are for thee."

He lowered his voice, and whispered to her many an endearing word — lovers' words that are so lief and satisfying.

"How I have loved thee!" he said. "My whole life was given to thee. I would have spent myself upon thee. Rememberest thou the days that are past how I folded thee in my abai, and told thee it was large enough for two?"

"Yea, yea; how could I forget?"

"Mashallâh — praise be to God! When I think of it, I am again among the lilies and the asphodels, and the gold and silver blooms; and the day is sweet and shining; and thy love hath made me blest; and the world is kind and beautiful; and all is well. When I recall it, I am a man and strong once more — I am strong and free. Were it not that it would be worse than madness, I would, even this moment, again attempt to escape. But it would be folly; they have their pickets placed all around. As I am now, we could not evade them. I know not how it was that they did not intercept thee. It was Allah brought thee to me."

"Yes, it was Allah brought me to thee," she softly echoed, with her lips to his.

"And now, Hilwe, wilt thou not have mercy upon thyself? Wilt thou not heed the words I spake to thee, for the sake of thine unborn child? Would that thou wast in a place of safety! Did I only know that thou wast safe, I should not care what hardship and trouble befell me."

Before she could make reply, they heard the tramp of approaching feet. This was followed by the flash of a lantern through the branches of the nearer trees.

"They are coming! They are even here!" cried Kadra, rushing out of her place of retreat, and taking her stand beside Hilwe.

"Fly, Hilwe! Fly, while there is yet time! Save her, Kadra!" exclaimed Hassan. "Take care of her, and be good to her."

The next instant the lantern was turned full on them, and they were quickly surrounded by the guard.

"Hah! Another attempt to escape," said the officer in command.

"Nay, thou art mistaken," exclaimed Kadra. "We found him dying — almost dead; and we loosed him to save his life."

"That sounds well. Verily that may be so," was the mocking retort. "He looks very much alive now, at any rate. But how comest thou here?"

It was a moment of terror. The horror they had been anticipating had fallen upon them.

"Wilt thou not have mercy?" pleaded Hilwe. "Indeed it is we who are to blame."

She wrung her hands in despair as she spoke the words, which were unheeded, and hardly knowing what she said.

"Do your duty, men! Take him!" rang out the order. "We have no time to lose. We can risk no more in a case like this. Bring him along!"

The women were promptly thrust aside by the soldiers, while they seized Hassan.

They closed around him, and dragged him off with them, though he was scarcely able to move.

This was the last Hilwe saw of him.

The guards with Hassan passed through a larger body of troops, with the action of a machine.

The darkness and the unknown had swallowed him up.

All was so inexorably sharp and swift, it was like a heart-thrust from a rapier — the cleaving of souls in sunder.

Only a few minutes afterwards, a pencil of light pierced the gloom, and returning footsteps were heard. It was the officer with one of his men, carrying a lantern.

"Where are those women?" excitedly asked the former of the latter. "Was it not here we left them?"

"Yes, it was here," was the reply.

"Then, where are they?"

"God knows."

They spent some time carefully but unsuccessfully searching over the ground.

"I cannot find them."

The soldier spoke with provokingly stolid manner.

"No, thou canst not. The more the pity."

Then, the officer giving vent to his disappointment in more than one malediction, they departed whence they came.

Hilwe and Kadra, at the first glimmer of the returning lantern, had taken warning and, hand in hand, fled under the friendly shadow of the palms and orange-trees, spending the remainder of the night in safety beneath an opoponax hedge.

CHAPTER XXXV

HASSAN had indeed fallen upon evil days. The light had faded from his eyes. Those great luminous eyes were like eclipsed planets whose light is turned to shadow.

His fears for Hilwe's safety were maddening. He tried to steady his mind and think, but he could not.

What was that hammering, that throbbing? Was it in his heart or in his brain? It kept saying, "Where is she? Where is she? Where is she? Thou coward, why dost thou not save her?"

The narrow room, or rather cell, in which Hassan was placed that night could scarcely be considered inviting. From its appearance it would be difficult to say whether

it belonged to a monastery, or a jail, a barrack, hospital, or fort. It was scarcely eight feet square, and its entire furnishing consisted of a few handfuls of straw and a mat, the substitutes for a bed, which lay in a dark corner upon the stone floor. The walls were of the extraordinary thickness of ten feet.

The cell, whose smallness did not prevent its being lonely, evidently overhung the sea; for, through the loophole at one end, the damp, saline breath of the Mediterranean blew in with incessant sighing and a coolness which was not unrefreshing to Hassan in his fevered delirious state. He could hear, in the obscurity of the night, the surf raving and complaining in its unknown tongue, which it had learned before ever there was human voice, or the spirit of God had moved upon the face of the void. How it swells and breaks against the rocks beneath and sends up dashes of spray, smiting the foundation and lower parts of the building with an angry hissing threat!

"I shall rive the soul out of me, or I shall have thee," it seemed to say.

Perhaps it was the reincarnation of the dread sea monster slain by Perseus, fiercely vindictive, still venting its spite, gnawing at the rocks and the work of man's erection in its attempts to devour the land, which it manages to nibble off, bit by bit.

And to-night was there not in Hilwe another Andromeda? Where was the Perseus to save her?

Then, too, thundered in his ears, to him that unwonted, boundless, untamable sound, the trampling of the sea upon the outer reef, — those myriad voices, the noise of many waters. It was the proclamation of the dominancy of the great deep. Human voices were still. He was alone with those mighty powers, — the darkness and the sea. He was alone with his thoughts, — and even they were treacherous.

While Hassan had hung in torture upon the accursed tree, overwhelmed, degraded, stripped of love, friends and all, what thoughts filled his breast, — who could tell? who could know?

How can a man preserve his integrity under such pressure?

The poor overpowered body may yield, for the flesh is weak and has its limits, no matter how willing may be the spirit. The flesh may succumb, the body may swoon and carry the mind with it, — was it not so with Savonarola, Galileo, and many another great one? — but there is something which remains unsubdued, untainted, unaffected.

The soul! The universal soul!

And the mind itself can prove worthy of its high estate, of its kinship with God and the angels, and so may triumph despite the subjugation of the body.

The strait he was in was sore, desperate, — almost too much for mortal endurance. Death would have been a blessed relief.

Those who had placed him there, exposed, aloft, stood around and laughed and derided. They pointed at and criticised his parts. His weakness and nakedness and distress were a scoffing and a byword with them. His very self seemed to turn and mock him. Surely he was humiliated and set at naught, — racked with pain and misery inexpressible.

When he raised his great eyes, heavy with sorrow, full of the languid utterance that words fail to convey, their mute appeal, intensifying their beauty, might have wrung pity from a stone, and should have woke the heart of ordinary humanity to compassion, if not to love.

Was there no kindly response? None.

How cruel can man be to man! Has it not been written with a finger dipped in blood?

Once, being in great agony, he prayed, "My God, my Father, thou knowest my tears in the night, when I was hidden in the darkness, and there was no eye to see me but thine. My heart is in thine hand, to crush it or to restore. I have naught to hide from thee: if I would conceal it, I could not. Amen. Do what thou wilt with me. Thy will be done."

His strength was ebbing, his mind wandering.

All the perplexities and trials he ever had been involved in came back to him in a strange panoramic vision. He saw himself an innocent little boy, playing with pebbles and flowers, wrongfully blamed and

punished; then he was a lad, — a muleteer, exposed to hardships and privations and dangers; afterwards came that mixed experience at school. At length he was a young man, filled with the pride, the passion and instincts of his sex, almost before he knew it. Hilwe came upon the scene. What joy! What volume of life! What love! How the temptations, perils, and responsibilities multiplied! How many hairbreadth escapes he had had! What conflicts and secret dealings with himself! What strife with others! He recalled his fight with the leopard and the onslaught of the people of Malha.

How real in feeling, form, and colour they all appeared. Many of them were grievous and hard to be borne at the time, — yet now they seemed as nothing. His present troubles were the momentous overwhelming weight.

But these, too, perhaps would pass. All things had an end. Life itself was but a transient dream, and, like a vision of the night, would vanish and become as though it had not been.

This he tried to tell himself. But his thoughts were blurred and incoherent. His sufferings were not to be ignored. The wrench his body and mind had received, — were receiving, — was but too present with him to be eluded.

Then came a drowsy aberrant interrogation of himself:

"Dost thou fear to go to sleep?"

"No."

"Then why shouldst thou fear to die? It is no more than falling asleep."

It was as if some one else spoke the words, and he was an unconcerned listener.

He now was past thinking. And still he hung upon the tree.

Again the compelling anguish drove him to the utmost stress, — to the point when he felt his life must depart. It was better so. The world reeled before him and went out like a candle. He must go with it. All was dark. There was nothing left the senses to grapple with. His

heart beat slowly, — more slowly still. Now the senses themselves were gone. His eyes closed. He drew a few feeble breaths in gasps. He knew no more.

The mystery attaching to unconsciousness, sleep, death, is one of the impenetrable things with which we have to deal. It has always puzzled the few who have thought about it. It is a horror to the many. Not one of the explanations is satisfactory. It has ever been inexplicable, and bids fair to remain unsolved for man. God wills it so. It is best.

The suspended animation in Hassan's case was of but short duration. The passionate force of the man was inveterate in him. It awoke him. It came to the rescue and conquered. But how sad was his state. Without immediate succour it was apparently the last effort of which he was capable. Weak and helpless, and torn with agony, he hung suspended, when that faint despairing cry to Allah burst from his parched lips.

"Allah! God! Jehovah! Where art thou?"

But even then the angels of deliverance were near, and came in the shape of Hilwe and Kadra, bringing him sweet if only temporary comfort.

His condition had certainly not been improved by his being dragged through the dusty lanes and over the heights to his cell in Jaffa. The hakîm in attendance had placed him on the sick list, and had given a prescription; but that was all the benefit that Hassan derived from it. The medicine never reached him. In the confusion it was forgotten. Perhaps it was as well.

In the early dawn of the following day he thought he heard a voice — some one wanting him, calling him. He awoke from such fitful slumber as he was able to get through the night, and, though racked with pain from head to foot, arose from his bed, and, looking through the loop-hole which served as a window, he saw with renewed wonder the wide expanse of the Great Sea.

"Taieeb!" he exclaimed. "It is long since I have seen thee."

How miraculously blue and beautiful it was! Liquid lapis lazuli.

Under the shelter of the rocky reef which ran all along in front, lie tossing and rolling a number of the smaller shipping; but there is no regular harbour or breakwater — not any more than when King Hiram, of Tyre, landed here, three thousand years ago, his cedar for Solomon's Temple. It would not take a great stretch of the imagination to see the Tyrian sailors heaving and hauling, through those narrow channels, the huge cedar-beams from Mount Lebanon. Those dark isolated masses of rock rising at intervals out of the seething waters, in long, curving line, are asserted by tradition to be the remains of the vertebræ of the mythical monster which would have devoured Andromeda, had it not been slain by Perseus. It is classic ground. Greek myth mingles with Bible story, both of them jostling modern history; and there are those who believe with Pliny that Jaffa was in existence before the Deluge, and witnessed the commencement of that great spectacle when the waters of the flood were upon the earth, when all the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened.

Hassan gazed long and eagerly, watching the large heavily-lumbering barges pass to and fro through a narrow passage in the rocks. The transports lay outside, in deep water, far from shore. A lull in the wind had been taken advantage of to resume the embarkation of the troops, which would early be completed. The outgoing boats were filled with soldiers; and he knew his time soon would come.

"I must live, whether I am happy or not," he said with a sigh.

He hitherto had seen little of his keepers, but now they brought him some coarse food, which he ate greedily and with a relish, as he was famishing from his long fast.

The food put new strength in him. He felt better.

There was much noise and commotion in the vicinity of his cell. The officer of the day, in making his rounds, was pushing matters, annoyed with the slow movements, and the constant urging and personal attention necessary to get anything done properly and with dispatch.

Noticing the wretched condition of Hassan's uniform, he called attention to it with a severe censure.

The officer thus rebuked was nettled, and made an unsatisfactory reply.

"The collar is better than the dog," he ended with saying.

"Nay," said his superior, "rather should I say, the dog is worthy of a better collar. His clothes do not cover his nakedness. It is indecent. The pasha and kaimakam will be present to see us embark. Wouldst thou shame us, and at such a time as this, with every eye turned upon us?"

"It is his own fault," returned the younger man. "He is insubordinate. He has broken away repeatedly, and torn his outfit, and has —"

"I care not to discuss the matter," interrupted the other. "See at once that he is provided with a proper uniform."

The order was duly conveyed.

"Bring several, from which to choose," he added.

Knowing too well the aptitude to postpone, prevaricate, or evade, inherent in the Oriental, he waited till the uniforms were brought, from which one was selected for Hassan. Meanwhile, attracted by the young giant's remarkable appearance, he entered into conversation with him. There was an unmistakable glow of admiration in his glance as, drawing near, his eye measured the grand proportions, the well-built limbs and muscles of this rare specimen of manhood, who obediently arose, saluted, and stood before him in his miserable rags.

Probably there was a sense of pride in the bin-bashi, or major, as he thought and felt that, to a certain extent, he was his lord and master — that the man who stood before him was in his power, to do with as he willed. But there was also a stronger and a better feeling — the bond of sympathy and kindred, that, without words or voice, appeals to the nature and tells a man: "We are of one flesh. I am thy brother. Are not thy members, thy feelings, thy thoughts and thy passions the same as mine? Why should we be as enemies or strangers? Should we not be friends and brethren?"

Though the bin-bashi may not have put it to himself in exactly this shape, not to say in so many words, the sensation was there — something deeper than speech or thought.

He was an easy-going man, of some education and much knowledge of the world, solidly built, and with a pleasant face and genial expression. But, though fully up to the standard height, and well set off by his resplendent regimentals and military bearing, beside Hassan he seemed comparatively of moderate proportions.

His critical eye had taken in the subject at a stroke.

"Whence art thou?"

He questioned Hassan in a low voice and in a friendly tone.

"From Bettîr, O Bin-Bashi!"

"They seem to know how to build men of a goodly stature there."

"Ay. From of old, Bin-Bashi," responded Hassan, with so sober and earnest an air it brought a smile to the major's lips.

"If only thou hadst proper dress, and carried thyself more obediently, thou wouldst be a pride to the regiment."

It was the first kind treatment Hassan had received from officers or men. He looked down, silent and shamefaced, at the rents which discovered his nakedness. His large dark eyes then turned to the bin-bashi so wistfully, seeking his consideration — his approval, it made him feel it should be difficult to be cruel to the big handsome fellow. Their soft pathetic appeal — that unconsciously languishing glance, largely the result of his suffering, more fascinating, and enthralling, and compelling than that of any woman, staggered the will, and swayed the rather susceptible major in his favour, despite the disparaging remarks which the younger officer continued to make, aside, though audibly, and his prejudiced and exaggerated account of Hassan's escapades.

"I could take him to my heart," thought the major.

"I would put my heel on his neck," muttered the lieutenant.

How true are the words, which, though he had somewhat of their spirit, probably the bin-bashi had never heard:

> "If man to man be all he can,
> A very god is man to man."

"There are times when, under severe stress of trouble, a man becomes mystified — stupid," the major finally answered. "He drives headlong, without calculation — without rudder — without compass. One idea has taken possession of him. It dominates him. He cannot deliver himself from it. At length he knows not what he does."

"And thinkest thou it is the case with this man?"

"It seems to me so. There is some trouble weighing on the man's mind, or he would not act in such a way as thou hast said. The treatment he has received has made him worse. These fellaheen have more in them than thou thinkest. Hast thou never noticed the fine-mettled horse? Whipping sets him beside himself. This man is of too fine a mettle to be chastised as he has been. Under proper treatment he will make a good soldier."

"Mayhap. But he will have to improve his ways."

"Is he married? It may be the man is leaving a wife."

"Nay, Bin-Bashi," was the answer. "He is not married."

By this time the uniforms had been brought; and one having been found, not without some difficulty, to fit Hassan, he divested himself of his rent and ragged suit, and transferred his lordly bulk to the more agreeable habiliments. The major, greatly amused, stood by the entire time, to see they did right by the young conscript, who bore the trying ordeal with admirable dignity.

He was immediately ordered out to join the company to which he belonged; and they were marched, without further delay, to the landing, where they were rapidly embarked.

All was done so quickly, and they were kept so constantly occupied, Hassan had scarcely time to think of his personal griefs.

The boatmen who conveyed the soldiers to the transports managed their heavy, unwieldy-looking barges with consummate skill. They were noted for their tact and ability in contending with the treacherous Mediterranean; and some of them were said to have their peculiar gifts by inheritance, and to be the descendants of the ancient Phœnicians who ages ago had plied their seafaring business at this place and along these shores. These water-dogs were true sons of Neptune, or of Dagon, if you will have it so, and were more at home on the wave than on the land. There were no boatmen like to them. They were of remarkable strength, and full of the manly nature that God loves. They swam like fishes. And many a shipwrecked vessel received timely aid through their noble, unselfish, and courageous ministry. Human life had been saved by them repeatedly, at the risk of their own lives. How glorious is a brave man! Any one might be proud to call them brothers.

They stood up to their huge oars, and strode to and fro as they wielded them. They reminded one of the rowers in the ancient galleys of historic Greece and Italy. It was nice work, shooting through the narrow opening in the rocks, as if between Scylla and Charybdis, where the oars could not be used, and with the heavy swells from outside rushing and breaking, and the spray drenching everything.

Inside, many feluccas, with their long yardarms and lateen sails, are still rolling and pitching in their poor shelter off the shore this morning.

What a fearful wonder it was to Hassan to find himself upon the palpitating flood, — lifted high heavenward one moment, plunged downward the next, carried off upon it he knew not whither!

They had reached the transport before he noticed it. The enormous dimensions of it were appalling. It seemed to have suddenly risen out of the deep by the stroke of the magician's wand — a phantom ship. It added to the mystery and his perplexity. It was already moving, belching out its black breath, and triumphantly snorting, eager to carry him away to a land he knew not of.

Horror and grief were contending within him. Between

the lurches of the boat, he half-climbed, and was half-pushed, up the hanging steps at the vessel's side.

He was on board. They were under way. All was over. His silent grief was suffocating him. But he gave no sign.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"I WENT in search of love, and lost myself," saith the Eastern proverb.

The women had been kept in ignorance of the sudden and early embarkation, which had been commenced quietly the day before, and it was advanced well toward completion before they discovered the state of things. Then there was sound of weeping and wailing.

There may be a love passing the love of woman — we see it referred to in Holy Writ — but when it comes to patient, daily devotion, who shall compare with her, the woman whom God has given to be with us? She is the angel of man's deliverance from his everyday cares and pains, who, loving him, sits by his home-fire, and protects his peace and comforts, keeping his heart fresh and warm, pure and joyous, and giving him courage for the conflicts of life. No matter how much a slave he may be among other men — here he is master.

The poor, distraught creatures, — these simple peasant women, with dishevelled hair and raiment, little caring how they looked, some of them bearing in their arms the suckling infant or astride their shoulders the children of greater age, rushed with passionate words and barbaric cries across the intervening space, which in their eagerness they would gladly have annihilated; swarming impetuously up and over the heights of Jaffa, through the crooked, ill-paved streets, till, fearful, longing, and despairing, yet hoping in their despair, they reached the entrance to the landing-place, where the embarkation was proceeding steadily, remorselessly.

They came with fainting heart and trembling limbs, Hilwe and Kadra among them, — but only to be denied

admittance. The gates were closed in their faces. For them there was no incoming. They were shut out with their misery.

In the madness of their disappointment, they and the men with them became desperate.

"Let us break the gates down," they screamed. "Why should they keep us from our husbands and our kith and kin? They are leaving us. Our loved ones are taken from us. We shall never again behold them."

There was a wild, incoherent struggle.

But the guard, stationed there with fixed bayonets, kept the way. It was useless to attempt to force an entrance.

One of the women, who made an impetuous onslaught, trying to reach the gateway, was accidentally wounded by a bayonet.

"The guard will fire upon us," some one shouted.

Others of the women repeated the words.

There was at once a panic.

They fell back, in complete disorder, trampling each other. Their bitter cries stained and poisoned the air. Their words were broken with their weeping.

"Woe, woe be to the day on which all this misery and sorrow and unspeakable calamity hath befallen us! Where is our help? There is none to pity us."

"Yea, there is none to pity us," came back in an echoing chorus or refrain.

They beat their breasts and rent their garments, tearing their hair as they cried aloud.

Then one suggested a move that was eagerly accepted:

"Let us go around, and on by the beach."

"Ah! why did we not think of it?"

Suddenly they were all hurrying in that direction, as though possessed by some superhuman agency.

They came out at a place near to where, tradition says, the great fish cast forth Jonah. The spot where the discontented prophet was so unceremoniously landed is immediately north of Jaffa. There is an unoccupied sandy space, with occasional tufts of coarse sea-grass, and a slightly incurving shore, to the northward of which is a short, blunt point.

The aspect in some degree is desolate. Yet peculiar to these barrens, one of Nature's compensations, a delicate, creamy-white lily, eucharis-like, is found in its season, toward the close of the flower-year, beautifying the place. There are other flowers there, — flowers that men call weeds; but those lilies! — how they grow! How virginal they are! Ah! How shall such as I tell? They are beautiful enough for the dear Christ, the anointed, to have been born among them, — born among the lilies, as some say he was. But no, he was born in a herdsman's cave, among the cattle of the field. He, the Good Shepherd, began his shepherd's work early. He was born at Bethlehem, — the House of Bread. And is he not the Bread of Life which came down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall live forever?

As the wind blew over the lilies they seemed to whisper this. It was a holy mystery.

But that anxious band of men and women regarded none of these things. How should they, — the troubled souls? They crossed with hurrying feet the low wind-tossed dunes of yellow sand, and, reaching the shelving beach, ran along it to where it fronted the upper end of the town and grew narrow, scant, and at last was wanting altogether; the lofty wall of rock, crowned with flat-roofed houses, gradually sweeping out into the sea, and ultimately cutting off further advance. They could not reach the landing-place with its great stone steps, lashed by the wave, and green and slippery with confervoid growths; they could not even see it, though so near.

Yet they were near, — as near as they could get. That was something. Also they could see the barges, loaded with soldiers, shortly after leaving the landing.

One of the boats had already passed through the narrow opening in the reef. Soon another came in view from behind the rocky scarp. The word was passed that this was the last load. One of the transports was already under way. It was that on which Hassan had been placed, though Hilwe did not know it. The other transport was preparing to weigh anchor on the arrival of the approaching boats.

"Yea, it is the last boat," the shifting group of peasants moaned, in despairing confirmation of the fact.

As the barge, loaded down almost to the gunwales, shot forward, there arose from the women, who had flung themselves upon the ground, a great and exceeding bitter cry, — lamentation, and weeping, and mourning that would not be comforted.

"They are bound for Crete," remarked one of the men.

"It seems so. They head that way," returned another.

"There is an insurrection there; and, mark you, not many of these Syrians will come back. They will put them in the battle front."

The women took up the cry. It was the old story, — old when the bloody David ordered the noble Hittite, Uriah, "set in the forefront of the hottest battle" that he might be slain. Was it ever to be their fate?

"They will not return. They will be slain," was their repeated lament.

To them, besides, Crete was a *terra incognita*, — a place of mysterious dread, thus adding to their horror.

Those poor dejected disconsolate ones found, in the very simplicity as well as the gravity of their affliction, their incapacity to deal with it. It presented no opportunity of attack. It was one great inert mass of incomprehensible wretchedness which it was out of their power to handle or contend with. They flung themselves upon the ground and cast dust upon their heads. The joy had gone out of their lives.

Yet the shadow on the awful dial of time moved forward, unheeding. All things went their accustomed way as though nothing especial had happened. How hard it is for those bowed with sorrow to find that Nature has no sympathy with them!

The sea lay dimpling and sparkling off Jaffa as its ancient gray and white houses, with an occasional dome and minaret, enshrined amid orange and lemon groves and stately palms, lifted themselves high above it in the calm, dignified beauty of repose so peculiarly Oriental. The sunlight flashed with unequalled power and splendour as if it tried to pierce into every place, into every

nook and corner, — such blinding sunlight as is unknown in western lands, making one think of the burnished blaze of glory that we are told illumines the streets of the heavenly city, proceeding out of the great white throne.

A squadron of war vessels, lying off the town, lifted their black hulls out of the celestial blue of the waters. How ominously their grim visages loomed in profile against the horizon! They were broadside to Jaffa. What embodiments of power! They could easily blow the whole place to pieces in a few minutes. But now the great bulldogs lay silent and quiet enough, their hoarse voices unheard all day except when they saluted the admiral in his going and coming. They were the visible presence of England, for they belonged to her navy.

But were they of help to interfere to protect these poor peasants of Palestine, now dragged and driven by a power they hated but must obey?

Oh, no! Why should it be expected? It was all the other way. Ostensibly they were friendly to the Ottoman power. It is the peculiar compelling shape of things which brings this to pass. For they love not the Turk; and the Turk, knowing this well, and openly saying that the pretended friendship is all for a selfish purpose, loves not them.

Few, indeed, love England, excepting her own sons. But is not their loyalty, their love and devotion sufficient return for the most exacting of mothers?

The grand old lioness looks out of her island den with whetted talons and bloody fangs, mighty from many a conflict, and a proud light gathers in her unblinking eyes, and the joy of strength fills her dauntless heart, where perhaps sometimes the pitiless thought comes, "Shall I not have my hest?" And again, "They hate, because they envy," or "What care I for the hate of others while I have sons such as these to love me and defend me? God and my right. Evil be to him who evil thinks."

Those sable floating batteries, thrust in imperial evidence against the serene sky, with their sultry meteor flags, — blood-red, with dark-blue unions bearing the sacred sign of the triple crosses, which have gone into

every sea, carrying civilisation before them, they are, indeed, the symbol, the manifestation of the pride, strength, honour, and justice of the greatest power upon earth, the Mother of Empires, whose protection of the weak and helpless is her glory and boast. How those sombre stately masses of potential wrath could flame out, at the word, loud-mouthed with defiant protest.

But what could be said or done, felt or known in such a case as this? What pretence was there for appeal to arms or for diplomatic or any other interference?

Because a poor peasant of Palestine is violently wrenched by his lord and master, the Sultan of Turkey, out of his quiet, simple Judæan life, that he might render to the State the military service which he owes it, must the heavens fall? must the dogs of war be loosed? and must the peace of Europe be menaced?

Alas, what was of such cruel and fearful import to poor Hassan, — the rending and breaking up of his life-prospects, — perhaps the ruin or the death of Hilwe, — was scarcely of more moment to the great world than the ripple-mark left by the wave upon the beach, or the fall of a leaf into an autumn brook, ruddy as claret with its crimson trophies of the forest!

How rapidly the transports disappeared! They became as specks on the horizon. Then nothing was seen of them but a hazy patch of smoke, like purplish vapour, as if they and all upon them had been dissolved in the opaline atmosphere and finally had evaporated and been utterly disseminated throughout the universe.

The women gradually left in groups of twos and threes. Only Hilwe and Kadra remained, — they knew not why. In vain had Kadra sought to comfort Hilwe and lead her away.

"Take it not so much to heart, Hilwe," the elderly woman had said. "Wherever there is a rose, there is a thorn. Every sunbeam casts a shadow. Wilt thou kill thyself? Hassan will come again."

"How can he come?" said Hilwe.

"Even in like manner as he went will he return. Will not the ships bring him? Why shouldst thou break thy heart?"

Hilwe answered not. She only shook her head and kept gazing in the direction which the transports had taken, a hopeless vacancy draining the light from her eyes.

"Alas, I perceive my words avail not to give thee solace!" said Kadra. "I have no power to help thee. What I say to thee is as naught. It is like one pomegranate and a hundred sick."

She withdrew a space, and seated herself beneath a weather-beaten bush, on a sandbank.

"It is best to leave her alone awhile," she said. "I see it torments her to be spoken to. There is not a tear in her eye. Her heart is turning to stone. Allah pity her and me. Mayhap she will weep and recover herself if left alone. It is but one heavy heart trying to lighten another."

Hilwe walked listlessly along the beach, to the farthest point where the high scarp of rock jutted out, cutting off advance. Facing the hard black insurmountable obstruction, mechanically she looked upward. The massive stone houses of ancient build were a prolongation of the cliff or precipice, carrying it skyward, in one sweep, at the sea front — upon its very verge. She happened to stand beneath the building, her eyes resting upon it, where Hassan had been confined the night before, though she knew it not.

Early that morning, while yet the darkness contended with the grey dawn — long before the rising of the sun from behind the mist-shrouded Judæan hills — she had arisen and stolen down, all alone; and, as she wandered with the wild passionate hope of seeing Hassan, some occult influence had guided her feet to this selfsame spot; and, as now, she had lifted her eyes to the same building with a vague incomprehensible desire, undefined and nameless, seemingly more allied to the unreasoning instinct of the animal, than to the promptings of the educated soul.

"If only I could see him," she kept saying.

Hassan had heard her voice, and started from his sleep. He was within that storm-scourged eyrie then, though no cognizance of the complete fact had reached her

jarred and troubled mind. Even when he looked through the narrow loophole of his cell, neither of them could see the other. Yet some fragmentary inchoate suggestion of his presence affected and moved her. It had detained her there till she saw the preparations for the resuming of the embarkation; and it was she who had been the means of conveying the information to the other women and the rest of the party.

Again, when they had failed to gain admittance to the landing, it was Hilwe who had proposed to go around, and on by the beach — the only opportunity left them of obtaining a last look of their departing loved ones.

Now her mind seemed to have become dulled and numbed from all she had suffered. Though she saw surrounding objects, it was without appreciation of the fact; as when the eye scans an entire page of a book, and the preoccupied intelligence takes no note of the subject treated of.

The long olive-brown streamers of the frilled and fluted sea-tangles, twined and massed with green and crimson ribbons, and feathery fringes of maroon, puce and erubescent algæ, and silvery coral-like fronds — the flowers of the deep — lay heaped in windrows at her feet: she saw, and yet she saw them not. Nor did she notice the murex, whose pallid shell for ages held the sumptuous secret of the Tyrian purple — the voluptuous dye that flamed and revelled with unholy pomp in the imperial robe, to gorge the æsthetic lust of emperors and kings. And yet, had she but noticed, she might have seen that strange ensanguined lachrymation peculiar to it, and thought that the little creature within that pearly tenement wept in sympathy with her, shedding as it were, telltale tears of blood, like to the sacred ichor — that ethereal fluid which, they inform us, flowed in the veins of the gods.

Thus Hilwe stood, lingering on the sands under the rocky cliffs of the stolid macrobiotic town. Her eyes were now turned from its mouldering walls, and were fixed on the spot where the last trace of the smoke of the transports had left its fast-vanishing blur upon the sky.

Yes, the last vestige of men and ships had now disappeared. There was nothing left to mark the place where they had gone out, and down — sunk out of sight. Even the faint fugacious tinct upon the heavens had died away. They were not. So it appeared to Hilwe.

A convulsive sob shook her breast and broke on her lips.

"O my Hassan," she cried, "thou art lost to me! Shall I never again behold thee?"

Over the waters came, clear and penetrating, as if in response, the melancholy cry of the seafowl, so unearthly, so far-reaching. It was startling to her to whom it was unfamiliar. Out of a large flock of grey and white gulls disporting themselves in the vicinity of the reef, alighting on the swell, plunging into the crest of the surf, one had separated himself from his fellows, and, with easy sweep of dauntless resolute wing, swiftly approached the spot where Hilwe stood, till he hung poised above her head. That note of shrill alarm, that challenge heroic, yet heartrending as a coranach, who that has ever heard it does not recall how it made the soul thrill and vibrate? It is one of the weirdest sounds in nature — the sadder for coming out of so fearless a breast. Does the spirit of some dead corsair inhabit the bird?

At the same instant, that dominant seventh-born master-wave, lording it over his fellows, leaping every barrier, came foaming in, from the deeps outside, rushing and roaring in his virile impetuosity, and, running up to her, kissed her naked feet.

In her overwrought state, these things were as answers to her, — messages from the departed. The tears, at last, rolled down her cheeks. She wrapped her head in her garment, and utterly gave way to her grief.

Kadra's arms were around her.

"It is all over, Hilwe. Come with me."

"O Kadra, he is gone! They have taken him across the Great Sea, I know not whither. What will become of him? And what will become of me without him?"

"Have courage, Hilwe; thou art not altogether alone. Am I not with thee? Do I not remember the last words Hassan spake to me? Did he not say to me, — 'Save

her, Kadra.' And I will save thee with the help of Allah."

"Ah, how good and brave he was, Kadra! Even in his extremity he thought not of himself, but of others."

"Do I not know it?"

The tears were coursing each other fast down the tanned weather-beaten visage of Kadra as she leant aside and murmured to herself something which was inarticulate to Hilwe.

"Allah bless thee, Kadra; thou art kind to me past all kindness; and may the All-Merciful reward thee as I cannot."

"Why should I not remember Hassan's last words?" said Kadra. "Shall I not do as he said?" Then she added, aside, "Ah, she little knows how I love him!"

The salty breeze from off that immaculate ultramarine and viridescent water blew the loose dampened wisps of her dark hair in her eyes, partially veiling the grim, gaunt face that, at times, was apt to look rather repulsive. She did not brush the Medusa-like locks aside. They hid her tears. That high-arched nose, of aquiline contour, which gave her an aristocratic mien, those piercing black eyes that were capable of striking fear of the "evil influence" into the hearts of her enemies, and the thin-lipped sarcastic mouth of sardonic curve — the lips like twin snakes — what holy change had come upon them? The sweet, motherly expression in her face made her almost beautiful, as, clasping Hilwe to her breast, she murmured, in tones like the cooing of the dove, consoling little words and gentle assurances such as the Arabic tongue and the native thought abound with:

"Little lamb, we have wandered far from the fold. We are as lost sheep. We have strayed many days from our pasture. Let us return."

She led Hilwe across the billowy sands, through the lilies which no man had planted or cared for — which were the planting of the Lord. And as she went she sighed and said:

"I have seen enough of Jaffa and its orange-groves and palms, its pomegranates and melons, and the Great

Sea in its garment of sapphire. Give me the hill-country — give me Malha. It is my home. I want no other."

At the mention of the hill-country and Malha a great fear filled Hilwe's heart.

"How shall I show my face there?" was what she said secretly.

She trembled at the thought.

That day the sun went down off Jaffa like a chariot of fire — with horses and horsemen of flame. He sank in the sea, just at the spot where the transports had disappeared. The glory of the Lord shone round about; and the sea, and the land, and the heavens above were exultant because of it.

But the poor peasant women returned to the hill-country of Judæa whence they came, sorrowful, weeping, broken, their lives darkened, and their hearts heavy with their trouble.

CHAPTER XXXVII

LONG had the time elapsed which had been mentioned in the agreement between Abd-el-nour and Ismail, Hilwe's uncle. Month after month had passed away since the doura and all the other crops enumerated in the marriage contract had been gathered in, and Abd-el-nour, the formerly expectant and eager bridegroom-elect, remained silent, dark, and glum, — though surely he had saved more than the portion he had promised for Hilwe.

True, this was but the latter phase of the affair. Until lately he had been exacting and importunate in the matter; and, in urging his suit, had caused Hilwe no little trouble, dread, and annoyance, through her uncle and Fatima.

Kadra had spoken her mind freely on the subject:

"It is better for a young woman to have an arrow in her heart than the man she hates by her side," she said.

But her words were unheeded.

Hassan and Chalîl's appearance upon the scene in Malha had at the time only strengthened Abd-el-nour's case; though, doubtless, certain suspicions were aroused which were not easily laid. But the episode of the great storm and flood, and the detention of Hilwe in the cavern with Hassan had given rise to unpleasant doubts which rankled in Abd-el-nour's breast, and not without reason.

It had been her uncle's policy to make light of it, lest, otherwise, Abd-el-nour might raise objections and cast her off.

"It is an unfortunate accident which might befall anyone," he said.

"Yea — perhaps," the other had replied, in a non-committal spirit.

The additional amount promised by Abd-el-nour had increased the uncle's cupidity, and intensified his anger at any danger of disappointment. But his prudence kept his wrath within bounds.

So the months passed by. The harvest was over, the summer was ended, the autumn gone, and the winter was far advanced.

"He claims her not," quoth the uncle, anxiously. "He is deceitful."

Various pointed hints dropped by Ismail had failed to be noticed by Abd-el-nour. Provoked at his studied indifference, Ismail openly broached the matter, calling attention to the original contract and the sum in excess promised, in the excitement of the moment, at the time of Hassan's visit to Malha.

Abd-el-nour was equal to the emergency, and replied in language more pronounced than delicate, considering the subject.

"A bitter answer will only stir up strife," thought Hilwe's uncle, and, after some mollifying expression, added, "Surely thou wilt keep thy promise."

"Where is her lover from Bettîr? Hath he deserted her?"

The words were spoken by Abd-el-nour with a sinister accent that was unmistakable.

Further pressure applied by Ismail only drew more splenetic and offensive retorts.

"The lion does not eat the dog's leavings," was the final and cutting response of Abd-el-nour.

"Lion, indeed! No lion, but a mangy and cowardly dog art thou!" was the instantaneous, unforgivable reply of Ismail, now furious at the insults heaped upon him.

The older man, wrapped in his miserliness, feeling he had the better of the argument, turned with a sneering laugh, and went upon his way.

"I have my money in my purse, and not paid out for a wanton," he muttered.

That laugh and the contemptuous looks and words were maddening to the disappointed and humbled Ismail.

"Every dog that barks in his own village street thinks himself a roaring lion."

Unable longer to control himself he hurled the exasperating sentence at the retreating Abd-el-nour, who, evidently fearing that the angry words would be followed by blows, was hastening off as fast as his shuffling gait would permit.

As soon as he reached his own door he paused, and, facing about in the direction of Ismail, made a peculiar movement with his fingers and hand to avert the evil influence which the latter might be supposed to exert against him.

The wily Malhaite was steeped in superstition, and was a slave to the traditional beliefs and customs which, to a greater or less extent, have taken the place of religion with the more ignorant of the fellaheen. On the wall of his house, near the doorway in which he stood, might be seen, conspicuously displayed, the impress of an upright open hand, considered an effectual charm to ward off the baleful sorcery of the "evil eye." Standing beside this potent spell, and within his own door, his courage revived sufficiently to permit him to gratify his hateful temper in a further volley of abuse.

"Verily, I believe he thought to obtain my money for that which he is unable to deliver," he exclaimed. "Go to! How know I what he giveth me? But I am not such an oaf as he supposes. He counts the sands of the desert on the rosary of his fingers."

Ismail was beside himself with rage. Yet what could he do? How could he help himself?

"What is the use of arguing with a liar, or with him who breaketh his covenant?" he said, as he turned away. "It is but waste of breath. The voice of the crow and the kite and the song of the nightingale are all alike to such as he is."

It may well be supposed that, under these circumstances, Hilwe's life in her home, hitherto sufficiently dreary, now became almost unbearable. She seldom had peace. Her uncle looked upon her as the cause of his losing the handsome marriage portion promised by Abd-el-nour. It was not to be forgotten or forgiven. She had been the cause of the breaking of the contract made with Abd-el-nour, which, whether written or verbal, among these simple people as with most Moslems, is all the ceremony required to constitute a marriage. Worse than this, she would be a shame and a reproach to her family and to her people — a disgrace and a dishonouring not to be contemplated.

Hilwe's only relief was, when opportunity was afforded her, to escape to the outdoor life and labour, in company with Kadra: the hard work was to her a blessing.

The usual long dry season of six months, in which not a drop of rain falls in Palestine, had been succeeded, toward the close of autumn, by what, to this day, are called, from olden time, the "former rains," which fell in sufficient abundance to permit early ploughing.

The consequent general activity was a temporary respite for the unfortunate young woman, though at no time was she entirely exempt from the cruel strain her peculiar condition and circumstances brought upon her.

Yet a few bright days were vouchsafed to her, when the natural cheerfulness of her disposition partially triumphed over her heaviness and trouble.

When she joined the women in gathering in the last of the olives, beating the boughs and collecting the fruit, which they called "milking the trees," somewhat of her former spirit revived in her, and, stimulated by memories of other years, and under Kadra's inspiration, the feelings and customs of olden time were entered into

and indulged in by most of the wives and daughters of Malha, glad for the occasion to break away from their gloom. They sang their simple songs, and repeated the ancient sayings and proverbs; and they told of former doings, and unexampled incidents, passing belief, as they entered into their labours.

Many of the sayings had pretty, double meanings, and were like parables relating to the trees.

"Till thou shakest the tree the olives will not fall," one would chant.

"Though the oak be strong, he gives us but acorns," rang out the recitative.

"The trees that bear fruit bear a burden as well," another would reply.

"The cypress from its uprightness was made free; it is always green," Kadra sang with a triumphant air, for her own name was in it, Kadra meaning "green."

As they stripped the olives from the limbs, Kadra reminded them of the old habit, not to glean them the second time:

"When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: Spare the fruit on the topmost limbs; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. Spare it, lest the tree bear not again."

The words had been made into a rude chant, like a psalm. None of them could tell how old it was. And they invariably left, at least, a few olives among the topmost branches.

"It is according to the custom of our forefathers," they said. "It is best to adhere to it."

In due time followed the making of the oil, an important work, in which the women largely participated, the olives being crushed and ground in the old-fashioned stone oil-presses of the country, used from time immemorial. In all the processes, to the running off the oil into the roughly-hewn stone trough, and thence emptying it into jars or skins, ready for sale or home use, the ancient customs and ceremonies were kept up, and there was much rejoicing, the people clapping their hands, and shouting for joy.

But Hilwe took pleasure in none of these things. At most, she regarded them as an escape or refuge from what long had ceased to be, if ever it had been, home to her.

When no other outdoor occupation offered, there always remained the fetching the water from the ain, or fountain. Of all Hilwe's tasks this was the one which appealed most to her. In traversing the ground, she passed over the way endeared to her by memories of Hassan — places closely associated with him and their love; and, as much as possible, she lived over again the feelings and incidents connected with him, so deeply embedded in her life, and which had revolutionised her character. Her very sadness and grief in this were a species of happiness. It was a holy grief, a sacred sorrow; and though the tear often overflowed, it was a relief, and the indulgence of feelings which could find no other satisfaction.

Nor was she so engrossed with her own troubles and sorrows that her mind did not revert to Amne, who had so often been the companion of her rambles, dwelling on the mystery of her disappearance.

"Poor Amne! What can have become of her?" she would ask.

Kadra and the other women latterly had ceased to speak on the subject. It no longer was a novelty or a wonder. They frowned at mention of the lost girl's name.

Once, in reply to a question of Hilwe's, the grim face of the wise woman assumed the grimmest aspect:

"As for Amne, she is lost," she said. "She cannot be found. And it is best for her that the people of Malha cannot find her. Allah be merciful to us. To judge from what some say, she would fare ill at their hands, should she fall into their power."

The words had an ominous and terrible meaning for Hilwe. Her face turned deathly pale.

"Dost thou think they would harm her?" she asked.

"I am certain they would."

"They would not kill her, surely?"

Kadra looked cautiously around before replying.

"Indeed! Would they not? Thou little knowest them, if thou thinkest that. They would stop at nothing."

Hilwe shuddered. She pondered what Kadra had said. It seemed to her a warning.

"Allah withdraw not his protection," she murmured.

Her trouble was assuming overwhelming proportions.

"I am in danger of my life; I must fly," she said. "O Hassan! why art thou not here?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AIN KÂRIM, the Eye of the Village, or the Fountain of the Village, as it may be translated, let it be remembered, is the birthplace of John the Baptist. It is now a small but pleasant village, situated in one of the most interesting and attractive of the valleys in the vicinity of Jerusalem; and its fountain, as we know, is celebrated for the purity and coolness of its water.

Here stood the house of the priest Zacharias, of the course of Abia, and his wife Elizabeth, who was of the daughters of Aaron — the father and mother of the Baptist; and this is the place of "The Visitation," where, nearly two thousand years ago, the aged Elizabeth received the visit of the Handmaid of the Lord — as well she called herself — her beautiful young cousin, the Blessed Virgin.

The entire situation is full of the most picturesque features, — olive groves, fig orchards and vineyards abound; the surrounding hills look down like guardian spirits on the gentle place; and I do not wonder that the children of faith feel that the very air is saturated with a sanctity peculiar to so highly-favoured a spot. The Salutation of Mary seems to ring in one's ears. The fastnesses and heights overflow with Heaven's melodies; and the valleys answer back. Oh, holy Motherhood, pure as the dew upon the untrodden mountain! Tabernacle of the Highest! "Blessed art thou among women!"

And, from out the nearer distances, resound anew the words: "The dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Peace — peace. It is all peace where such are. Mary! — Could she ever forget the voice of the angel? "He shall save his people from their sins." She hid those sublime mysteries in her heart, pondering, — that loving heart over which already hung the sword that was yet to pierce it.

What sweet converse those holy women must have had in walking together these village paths, visiting the fountain, drinking from it, as we drink from it to-day; looking forward into the wonderful future that was opening before them! For Mary abode here with her cousin for three months, before returning to her own house in Nazareth.

Previous to the birth of "The Forerunner," Elizabeth had hid herself for five months, as told to us by St. Luke. The narrative is unadorned and terse, yet sufficient for its purpose.

Such action, arising probably from her womanly modesty, may not have been remarkable under the circumstances, nor uncommon in the country. But it is possible the visit of Mary may have been connected with this incident, that, with her noble unhesitating obedience to the divine will, and her heavenly-mindedness she might strengthen the faith of the older and pious but less exalted and less devoted woman.

And now, in these latter days, under desperate circumstances, sorely pressed, and fearing for her life, Hilwe, having fled from Malha, hid herself, in this same place, knowing naught of the saintly women who, so long ago, had their abode here.

Her gentle heart, shadowed by that which was coming upon her, might well have failed her, for at such a time Death walks hand in hand with Life, and her case was one of special trial. Yet she kept her courage with the faith that God in such a crisis specially endows all his creatures with — even the wild goats of the rock when they bow themselves, and cast out their sorrows.

She was alone with the supernal voices, and multitudinous cries of Nature — the unwritten language of God. They were the sounds born of these very hills and dales, rocky mountain-cliff, seamed scaur and smooth plateau; and were harmoniously returning and sinking back into the matrix where they had been conceived and nourished. They were the modulated rejoicings and ululations of the untamed living creatures which the Creator, in his plenitude of love, had made free and gracious and beautiful upon the open hills. They were the songs of the wind, out on some tumultuous abandonment — the sobbing of the west wind, drenched with tears, lost in some desolate gorge of the valley.

Poor Hilwe! The pangs of maternity were upon her. The great and glorious Angel of Light and Life stood by, with his flaming sword of pain turning every way to keep the way to his invaluable treasure — the Tree of Life. That other angel also was there —Azrael the dreaded, with veiled face, too beautiful for man to look upon and live. More than once, in her anguish, did Hilwe stretch out her hands to him; more than once were his loving arms extended to receive her; and her straining eyes seemed to penetrate the veil which concealed the heavenly lineaments of him whom men call Death. For her heart fainted within her, and her strength ran low, and the dreaded one became pleasant to the eye, and to be desired.

But the Angel of Life trumphed, and, with the shout of the victor, lifted on high his trophy:

"A man child is born into the world!"

It was the echo of the creative voice when, at the birth of the universe, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

Now was she glorified in her pain. Now was she succoured and saved. The aureola of motherhood shone round about her, and sanctified her. Now was she more than ever akin to Nature and to God. She had given pledges of her divine birthright; and her title to womanhood had received Love's highest sanction.

"Allah hath had mercy on me," she said. "He is no longer angry with me. He is reconciled."

O Redeeming Love, Spirit of regeneration, blessed be thou, forever and forever!

The first longing wish of Hilwe's heart, on clasping her babe to her breast, was for Hassan.

"Oh, that Hassan was here to see him!"

And as she thought how far off Hassan was, and how impossible it was for her to have her wish, great tears filled her eyes.

"No, he cannot see him," she said. "I am weak and light-headed; it was wrong for me to ask for that which I cannot have. I must be satisfied. In good time it may come to pass that he shall see him."

So she comforted herself.

In the neighbourhood of the village is a glen where there are many caves and ruins. It was a favourable locality to hide in, isolated, and little resorted to, and she was not molested by the people in the place she had selected. This was a small cave, fronted with the dismantled remains of what in former ages had been a religious building, but the few broken walls of which now bore little resemblance to such a structure.

Here her child was born: and here Kadra, who was in possession of her secret, visited her repeatedly, bringing her supplies, and using great precaution lest she should be discovered.

It was plain from her actions that Kadra knew more than she disclosed to Hilwe; and that her fears for the latter's safety were only too well founded.

"I now always feel as if they were tracking me," she said to Hilwe. "It enrages me to think of it. I that came and went freely, with no one to say me nay, to feel that I am watched, and to be obliged to use deceit in order to circumvent them."

They were seated in the open air as she spoke, in a spot to where Hilwe had formed the habit of taking her child, that he might have the benefit of the fresh breeze and sunshine. With the inclination to gossip and intrigue inherent in the natives, Kadra had great enjoyment in those secret meetings, notwithstanding the risk connected with them; yea, perhaps, to a large extent, rather because of that risk or danger. She enjoyed re-

citing to Hilwe, who naturally longed to hear, all the sayings and doings in Malha, the tittle-tattle of the village, and the happenings, great and small, not only of the men and women, but even of the sheep and cattle, the goats and donkeys, down to the dogs, hens and chickens.

Kadra, too, had been a mother, though her children had died while yet little ones; and at sight of Hassan's child the motherly instincts revived and awoke in her. She, consequently, had much advice to give Hilwe as to the care and nurture of the boy, who, from the first, was large for his age, and who grew and waxed strong rapidly.

Thus the days had passed by, not without many an ameliorative touch for the banished Hilwe, to whom her, so far, undisturbed abode in the peaceful valley had given almost a sense of immunity in general, as well as security from special danger, in despite of threatful warning.

Even Kadra felt the sweet influence of the place and hour, as they sat thus in the open, beneath some unin-closed olive-trees, and began to think she might have exaggerated the evil intentions of the men of Malha. So that when Hilwe said: "Mayhap they speak worse than they would do," Kadra replied "Yea. God grant it be so!"

The little child beguiled and led their thoughts into pleasant channels.

"Is he not like Hassan?"

Hilwe lifted up her son, loosed of his swaddling clothes, as she spoke.

"He is his express image," exclaimed the childless Kadra, as she seized the infant and folded him to her breast.

A passionate love for their children is a high and stanch characteristic of the people. It partakes of the wild animal's devotion for its young.

"Ay, I see him in every limb."

"What name hast thou given him, Hilwe?"

"Ah! Have I not told thee?"

Now this was a slight evasion, for the subject was a

delicate one with Hilwe, and she felt shamefaced about it. "Yet why should I?" she thought.

"Nay, thou hast not told me," replied Kadra.

Hilwe kept her eyes fixed upon the ground, and remained silent.

"Thou hast not told me," reiterated Kadra. "But doubtless thou wilt call him Hassan, after the name of his father."

Hilwe suddenly raised her eyes, and looked full at Kadra, at the same time reaching her hands out for the boy, and pressing him to her.

"His name is Talmai," she said.

"Talmai, sayest thou?"

"Even so."

"There is none of his kindred that is called by this name — is there?"

"Hassan said that if ever he had a son he should call his name Talmai; and so it is his name."

Doubtless to Hilwe there could be but one Hassan; she did not wish to share the name even with his son.

Kadra, expressing her astonishment, and repeating her question, Hilwe added, —

"Hassan told me it was his father's name, and the name of his father's father."

Whereupon Kadra confessed her satisfaction. Custom had not been violated.

"Thou wilt, then, call him Talmai ibn Hassan — Talmai son of Hassan," she said.

To this Hilwe tacitly acquiesced. So the boy was named accordingly.

While they were yet speaking, and fondling the child, they heard a noise of footsteps and voices, mingled with other sounds, in the road below. A drove of camels went by with their awkwardly majestic stalk, tinkling bells, and grimly-gaunt faces, woe-begone to comicality, their labour-marked bodies padded by nature, as if for man's convenience, on which principle indeed their whole structure seems carried out. Was ever such a mixture of the grand and the grotesque?

"See there," cried Hilwe pointing to them in alarm, and clasping her child closer to her.

"Let us keep very quiet till they go by," said Kadra. "They may not notice us."

She drew Hilwe down beside her.

"I have always thought," she added, "that the camel, the Jew, and the olive-tree are of one breed. They all have in their natures the same stubbornness. It wearies one. It is the unbounded obduracy of them, worse than obstinacy. I know not how to call it."

It would be impossible to render in cool English the warm, high-coloured tone of her Arabic, as she dilated on the subject.

"Do we not speak of the enmity of the camel," she continued, "when we want to describe inveterate hatred? It never forgets its revenge, should a man happen to hurt or displease it. If it lived for one hundred years, it would still watch its opportunity to kick back, or spit at him, or, Allah preserve us, take off the top of his skull, at one bite. See how the hump-backed, — the crooked-necked ones, the vindictive, how they seem to sniff us out as they go by. What disdainful eyes they turn on us, as though they wanted to attract attention to us! And as for the olive-tree, what hardihood and endurance it has! If beaten, it bears all the better; if neglected or cut down, it still puts forth leaves and new growths. Give it the least chance, it is flourishing as well as ever. Shouldst thou burn it, or grub out the stump, the ungrafted roots would send up wild saplings, as if in defiance and contempt of thee, and as though it said, 'Thou hast punished thyself.' But when I come to the Yahoodi — the Jew!" — (Oh, what a volume of disgust was in her utterance of the word!) — "When I come to the Yahoodi!—Ugh! what shall I say? He is beyond all, for those qualities. They call themselves the people of God. Some, like the Turks, call them the people of Moses. To my mind, they are the children of Shaitân."

"Yet there is some good in all three, — the olive, the camel and the Jew," interposed Hilwe; "especially in the olive-tree."

"I speak not so much against the camel, — it is an example of God's wisdom; nor do I say aught against the olive-tree," replied Kadra. "Doubtless there is good in it, — it giveth us oil that maketh man of a cheerful countenance, — perhaps because it cannot help it. It is the best of the three; though, as I said, all are alike hard. But those Yahood, in Jerusalem!" — (Again what bitter scorn was in her tone!) — "When I think of them, I only can despise and loathe them. They are like walking dunghills. How they bickered and chaffered over what I had to sell, till they wore me out and distracted me! and, to get rid of them, scarcely knowing what I did, I let them have it at far less than it was worth, — and all my many hard days' work in the burning sun went for nothing."

"Too bad, too bad for thee," murmured Hilwe, sympathetically, with that indescribable shake of the head, and click of the tongue, and movement of the hands, which meant so much.

"There! As I live," said Kadra, "there is one of them. See that Jew. It is he owns the merchandise which the caravan is conveying. So we have all three — the Yahoodi, the camel, and the olive-tree — before us. The Jew smells money as you would smell the fumes of roast meat. I have seen this man more than once. He has much riches. Those Jews are crowding into the country, and filling it. They say they will again possess the land. They would deprive us of our inheritance, claiming they own it, through an old covenant with Chalîl — Abraham. Allah have mercy upon us! The Turk is bad enough. But if the Yahoodi governed, it would be past bearing. There would be no peace for any one."

Hilwe had hardly given full attention to Kadra's remarks, having often heard her expatiate on the Jewish question, and also being necessarily more or less occupied with the care of the infant Talmai. There was a further reason: she had observed that one of the camel drivers, who proved to be a man from the neighbourhood of Malha, had evidently caught sight of them, and, recognising them, had dropped out, and,

under pretext of cutting a stick from the hedge, had cautiously and slyly approached near enough to satisfy himself as to their identity.

Both the women were much disturbed at his actions; and Kadra, whose attention had been called to him by Hilwe, was convinced that the incident boded them no good.

"He will surely convey information to Malha of his having seen us," said Kadra. "This place will not then be safe for thee."

"With the help of Allah! it may not be as bad as thou thinkest," Hilwe urged, trying to reassure herself.

Yet she trembled for the safety of her little one.

"Yea; let us watch and hope for the best."

Leaning above the child, in their solicitude, the heads of Kadra and Hilwe came near to meeting, — the worn elderly face in proximity to the radiantly young and beautiful one of the mother. It was a sight recalling the great Holy Family, — that masterpiece of Raphael, which hangs with its six companion Raphaels, all apart, by themselves, in the Museo Nazionale, in Naples, and shows the fair, youthful Virgin and the aged Elizabeth bending with adoring reverence above the Holy Child, the boy John the Baptist kneeling before him for his blessing.

Kadra touched fondlingly, with warm love, the cheek of the little Talmai with her finger-tips, which she then kissed in honour of his being a man-child. The babe had begun to learn to be shy, — one of the first things the infant learns. He looked up and smiled, then suddenly hid his face against his mother's breast.

"Who could harden the heart against such a little one?" said Kadra. "Who could put forth a hand to hurt him?"

Hilwe stared at her. The words were to her idle words, as she clasped her boy to her bosom.

The last tinklings of the camel's bells had died away in the distance. The caravan had passed out of sight behind a curve in the hills, the spying muleteer having hastened forward to catch up with it. The air seemed saturated with odorous silence, and the blue

ether of the welkin, like powdered turquoise, seemed nearer than in other places, — as if Heaven itself drew nigh. The women, impressed with the quiet of the place and hour, hung their heads in pensive thought, as if loath to break the stillness. It soothed, and gradually drew their fears from them. It was so peaceful, hushed and calm, they could hear the faint rustle of the tremulous grasses at their feet; and the far-off stridulation of a locust, making nuptial music for his mate, as he clung to the overweighted scarlet blossom of a pomegranate, in one of the village gardens, came in a fine clear note of prolonged, attenuated tone, — the very ghost of sound, but still distinctly audible.

Suddenly they heard a voice out of this purple and golden lull. It seemed as if all the sweet and gentle sounds in nature had been gathered together to form the notes and the words:

"Allah ya-kareem! Allah ya-kareem! (O God the generous!)"

Kadra and Hilwe turned instinctively in the direction whence the tones proceeded. It was one of the ringdoves of Palestine, which had its nest in the adjacent ruins.

These birds are regarded as especially sacred. In cooing, they bow, as if in worship, saying what to the native ear resembles, "Allah ya-kareem!" — which, on the present occasion, was almost perfectly articulated. On account of this peculiarity, the Moslems and natives generally have so much affection for these gentle creatures that they consider it a great sin to kill one of them. Of course Christians, too, have a deep sympathy on the subject, believing it was in the form of a dove that the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ at his baptism.

"Listen, listen, Kadra! Hear how plainly it says 'Allah ya-kareem!'" exclaimed Hilwe.

"I hear it. Except the Angel Isrâfîl himself, the sweetest-voiced of all God's creatures, whose trumpet shall call to life the dead out of their graves, I doubt if any other being could sing so sweetly."

"Is it not a good omen?"

"Yea; that it is. Let us take comfort from it."

As Kadra saluted Hilwe and the child in bidding them farewell, she whispered:

"I shall watch everything closely, when I return to Malha. And should there be any danger to thee, I shall return quickly and bring thee word."

CHAPTER XXXIX

SINCE Hassan had arrived with the troops in Crete, there had been little or no news of him. The habit of writing letters is one seldom indulged in among the fellaheen, to whom caligraphy is generally a mysterious accomplishment; and the not sending or receiving such missives would excite no extraordinary feeling or comment. Not often can they read, still less often can they write, and the amanuensis is a rare commodity. Yet Hassan had written, once, twice, and even a third time, at lengthy intervals. But he had received no reply. His letters had never reached Hilwe.

As the time passed by, the fact that he had not heard worried him not a little. With her, who had never received a letter in her life, — why should she grieve or take it to heart that no epistle from Hassan was received by her? That, however, does not mean that she did not hunger and thirst for a word from him.

Reports enough of a certain kind relative to the soldiers reached Palestine.

It could not be said that they were favourable or reflected credit on them. Rather otherwise. These rumours contained complaints of the irregular doings of the troops, their lawlessness and violence, accusing them of murders, of assaulting women, and seizing and appropriating bread and other food and supplies wherever they could lay hands on them.

Various articles to this effect had found their way from month to month, not only into the London

"Times," but, so far as Palestine news was concerned, what was of more importance, into the "Egyptian Gazette," the latter paper, published in Alexandria, reaching Jerusalem much more frequently than did the great "Thunderer."

Though possibly not without a slight foundation of truth, the more horrible and blood-curdling of these reports were, in all probability, highly coloured, if not greatly exaggerated, to the disadvantage and disparagement of the Turkish troops, who, had they been as gentle as lambs, could not have proved acceptable to the Cretans, or have escaped calumny.

That the soldiers, both Syrian and Turkish, were quite bad enough without having committed some of the more extraordinary offences of which they were accused, may easily be admitted. But the surroundings in which they were placed presented inviting opportunities as well as extenuating circumstances, which, though not condoning the exceptional and more flagrant crimes, at least mitigated the grossness of the too frequent but less serious delinquencies.

As to particular or individual information, next to none was received by the families of the men in Palestine. Nor, as has been intimated, was this considered a grievance, or unusual.

Up in the mountainous parts, Hassan found much to remind him of the hill country of Palestine, with a difference. Here he again, in some degree, drank in the freedom of the hills. Here he found his lost self, though not his lost Hilwe. How he rejoiced and gloried in these purple heights! How grand, reminiscent, and inspiring they were! — Mount Ida, "many-fountained Ida," in almost the centre of the island, dominating all the ancient summits with imperial supremacy.

In the highlands dwelt the Sphakiots, — those hardy and brave mountaineers, now in open insurrection, who, from the isolated and inaccessible character of the place of their abode, have always been able to maintain at least a partial independence. They are of the same race as the inhabitants of the plains, but

this does not prevent their raiding upon the latter as occasion offers; and the restive character and fighting qualities of the Sphakiots constitute them far other than agreeable neighbours.

Yet, though sent to coerce them, Hassan could not help having a covert sympathy with them. He, no doubt, felt that, in their natures and habits, they had much which allied them to the peasant of Palestine. Were they not also rebelling against the oppressive alien rule of the Turk?

Thus the days, the weeks, and the months passed with Hassan, sometimes closely occupied, at other times with abundant leisure. He had adventures with men, adventures with wild hunted creatures on hill and in valley, adventures of all sorts, — exploits, warlike and other, in town and village, in mountain, on plain, and in wilderness. Life broadened and vibrated before him. He felt new strengths within him. How glorious!

Human nature, like all nature, has from top to bottom, from beginning to end, one predominant trait and procedure: it at once sets about accommodating itself to circumstances, when it cannot break through them and emancipate itself. It seems to consider it the next best thing. Hassan was no exception to this. He reconciled himself to his new life as best he could.

His quick, lovable disposition could scarcely be expected to turn to a cold, phlegmatic, uncompromising guard upon his actions at a moment's notice, and when he was taken at a pinch. Far otherwise. It played him many a false friend's part, without the least intention of treachery, and led him sometimes into doing that which he ought not to have done. His genial, manly ways brought him companionship which was not always conducive to his best interests.

His warm friendship for Chalîl had never wavered nor grown less; it still was characterised by the old-time fervour. But Chalîl was assigned to another company from that to which Hassan belonged. So their meetings had become less frequent.

In the tedium of the barrack and of camp-life, the soldiers had recourse, as usual, to various games of chance; and gambling, that bane of the Oriental, grew more and more prevalent among them.

One day, in the course of some heated play with a brother-soldier, an agreeable off-hand fellow to whom Hassan had been drawn of late, among some money thrown down by the former in making a payment, was a small disc of mother-of-pearl. Hassan had noticed it at a glance, something in its appearance attracted him, and his hand went out involuntarily to seize it.

"Ah, that is my talisman, the precious pledge of love!" cried his companion, who was given to boast of his amours, plucking it out from among the coins. "I would not lose it for the world."

There was that about the little carved amulet which strangely affected Hassan. It was like one he knew.

"Nay," he said; "but let me look upon it for a moment, Murad."

But Murad, affecting a mystery, and that it was connected with a clandestine love-affair, would not deliver the trinket into Hassan's extended palm.

"Ah! do I not see the eyes, so dark, so lustrous, of the damsel who, ere ever I left the shores of Palestine, gave me this love-token?" exclaimed Murad, as he pressed to his lips the glistening nacre. "Was she not fair as the noonday? Was she not indeed my love? Do I not now behold her fingers, pink as the dawn, and tipped golden with henna? Do I not feel her arms about my neck, as her lips, red as a cleft in a pomegranate, gave themselves freely to me that I might pasture on them? A man is naught without love. His history should be writ in love. He should be like a gallant frigate or costly argosy laden with richest freightage, with well-trimmed sheets and cordage, bearing bravely onward, forward, and with faithful prow, obedient to the helm, cleaving the purple sea of love into silvery spray."

Hassan's face grew darker, and his brow contracted as he listened to Murad's flowery pæan. The forced

smile faded gradually from his lips. His mind went back to the amulet.

"How like it is to that which I carved for Hilwe," he thought. "Yet it may not be — it cannot be the same."

"Thou needest not look so severe and cold, Hassan. A man built as thou art! Tell me, indeed! Ha, ha! Thou requirest no trumpeter to go before thee to declare it. Thou canst not hide it. I warrant thou art not without thine own experiences."

The attempted grin upon Hassan's mouth, expected in response to this sally, was of the sardonic order, and found no habitation there, but fled as soon as it came.

"But where is the abiding-place of this incomparable damsel — this leman of thine?"

"Must I tell thee? I trow not. That be far from me."

Murad thus replied, being confused at the close questioning.

"Thou hast said it was in the hill country," persisted Hassan. "Was it between Jerusalem and Hebron, nigh to — to Bethlehem?"

Hassan could not bear to speak the word which was upon his lips, and avoided mentioning Malha.

"Thou sayest. It was even so. Since thou hast lighted upon it, I may as well admit it."

The most loving heart is not warranted free from the canker of doubt. The heart of an angel may be warped with jealousy. So Hassan, as he heard the easy, likely Murad make his complacent, undisguised boast of his amour, felt his heart tremble and grow faint. He that had courage to face the battle-charge and confront any man, was weak and helpless in the presence of such a disaster, — the shipwreck of his love.

Yet he steadied his voice to speak and question the man, — he was very cruel to himself that he might be sure, and so be still more cruel. A gray pallor had settled in his face, which was drawn and torn with his emotions.

He fell into the mood of the man who held the secret of his misery, in order to reach that secret, and

questioned him as to the woman, — her voice, her appearance, her manner, with an agonising exactness.

"Thou art certain?"

"Yea, it is as thou sayest in every respect. I cannot vary an inch — or as much as a grain of mustard seed. Ought I not to know?" added Murad, with maddening significance.

"And her hair? Thou didst not mention as to her hair."

"Verily as thou hast said. Dark as night, and like a veil or mantle about her."

The veins were swollen to bursting at Hassan's temples and in his throat. He felt as if he would tear the secret out of him. He was suffocating.

"Didst thou know her, Hassan?"

"Know her?" thundered the reply, in such an unnatural, hollow voice, it startled Murad — "Know her? By Allah! I never knew her till now."

"I thought, from thy questioning, that perhaps thou mightest have known her."

"Ha, ha!"

There was something horrible, maniacal in that laugh, as if it held a groan and a curse. Murad could not join in it. He began to feel that all was not right with Hassan, that something was unlucky, unfriendly, and remained silent.

"And so thou didst imagine I knew her! Thou well mightest! But, nay, nay. How should I know her?"

Murad felt Hassan's eyes burn into him. How large and penetrating they were! He moved in his seat uneasily. His delightfully sensual mood and attitude were disturbed. He had answered many of the questions as if under a spell, — as if he could not help but reply. Yet he had enjoyed the amorous boasts. His happy self-confidence and exuberant animalism were now oozing away. What did it all mean?

"Wilt thou not let me see thy talisman — thy love-pledge?" once more requested Hassan.

He spoke smoothly, carelessly, as if it did not much matter.

"After all, why not?" airily responded Murad, relenting.

His hand went down willingly and comfortably, with a sense of pleasure, into the pocket of his trousers.

"There," he said, with an air of relief and pride.

He held the pearly disc between his finger and thumb, opposite Hassan, but did not give it into his hands.

"It is terribly like the asphodel I carved for her," was Hassan's sorrowful conclusion.

His light darkened.

There was one more question to ask, which Hassan shrank from. He tried to put it, and paused again and again. It was like exposing his last hope to its death-wound.

"And the name of this thy leman? How didst thou call her?"

The question revived, pleased and reassured Murad. He aroused himself.

"Her name, didst thou say?"

"Ay, her name."

"Hilwe," lightly answered Murad.

"Now God pity me!" was the cry in Hassan's heart, though unuttered by his lips.

There was a fierce glare, — a danger-light in his eyes.

"Thou liest!" he shouted. Then in a sort of luxury of agony, he added: "But if thou tellest lies, why be sparing of them? Why not unfold to me all thy sweet love-dalliance? — thy secret converse? Keep nothing back. There are no prudes here to call halt; no one to blush or cry shame. Tell it all! Liar, knave, beast, show thyself in all thy debauched nakedness! Let us see thee in thy full presentment! Allah curse thee, as I do, for a vile profligate wretch!"

Hassan had risen from his seat, that he might get a nearer view of the amulet. His was a striking figure. He drew himself up to his full height, his shapely thighs and legs ascending out of his long-boots like columns of perfection, the massive pillars of the glorious temple of his body. As he strode across the

floor, the distinction of the man was notable. Broad in the chest, square in the shoulders, gracefully thin in the flank, solidly jointed throughout, large and strong and grandly formed in all his members, his martial air and bearing permeated the whole, and his noble head and fine, intellectual face crowned the magnificent structure worthily. He was handsomer than ever. His varied mental and soul experiences had generated in him a wealth of expression of surpassing force, as the drill and military training had developed into a new beauty the salient features of his physique. He was a man to be worshipped, — a demi-god.

"But the damnably insulting words! How could any man endure them?" as Murad said.

He, the impetuous Murad, was instantly upon his feet, though he could scarce understand the meaning of the quarrel, which seemed to him so unprovoked. Without the least hesitation, he flung himself upon Hassan; nor was the gay, stocky soldier, of warm imagination, a combatant to be sneered at, or lightly to be considered.

They closed as in a tournament shock.

Locked in each other's embrace, they wrestled and struggled, writhed and twisted, with an amazing display of strength and agility. Many a ringing blow was given and received. Limb to limb, sinew to sinew, muscle to muscle, man to man, — every point was called forth, employed and thoroughly tested in the encounter.

They had seen the Greeks on the island in their wrestling-matches, which had somewhat of the flavour of the ancient Olympic games, and had learned and knew how to put to use some of their tactics.

But soon the more regular order of the conflict developed into a decided heat, and at length broke into what might be designated a frenzied rage. They handled each other severely, and without consideration of propriety. The scanty furniture of the room was hurled to and fro, as they swung from side to side, regardless of what might happen to their abused and battered bodies.

Then came a more deadly tussle. They clenched with desperate grip, and tried to throw each other by tripping. How closely they were clasped together! But how far it was from being a loving embrace! As if one man, — arms grappling, legs entwined, straining to the utmost, — they fell with mighty concussion, rolling over and over upon the floor.

Sometimes Hassan was on top, sometimes Murad. They struck out right and left. They pommelled and hurt each other as best they could. At last Hassan got Murad well under, holding him down with his weight, which was no light one. All the efforts of the latter to throw him off and release himself were in vain. As Murad was furious, and obstinately would not confess to being conquered, but still struggled vigorously, Hassan kept his place well on top, almost squeezing the breath out of the heaving, panting body beneath him, while insisting that the talisman should be delivered to him forthwith.

This demand Murad refused to comply with, though completely in Hassan's power.

"Wilt thou yield?"

"Nay."

"Then take this," said Hassan, planting a judicious blow.

To hasten matters, he took Murad by the collar, almost choking him, while he placed his knee upon his prostrate bulk, repeating his demand.

This brought Murad to terms.

"Wilt thou kill me?" he muttered.

"Ay, I shall kill thee."

"Hold. It is enough," cried Murad. "I did not take thee to be so bloody a man."

His crimsoned face was growing purple; and he compromised by saying that while he never should give Hassan the amulet, the latter might take it off his — Murad's — person. This seemed to satisfy the empty conceit of the overwhelmed man, who quietly, without the least hindrance, submitted to Hassan's plunging his hand into his pocket, and drawing forth the unlucky trinket.

There was not possible a single doubt as to the identity of the ornament. Hassan held it before him, and examined it over and over again with unnecessary scrutiny. Yes, he knew his own work, he could not be mistaken, it was the starry asphodel he had carved for Hilwe.

"Every man knows his own work," he repeated, with a heart-rending sigh.

There, too, was the place where she had interrupted him, and when, in consequence, he had carelessly let his tool slip, and slightly marred the carving. How well he remembered it. Then, turning the reverse, he saw where he had lightly scratched upon it Hilwe's name. It was now almost obliterated, through abrasion, and, together with a little private mark he had made, was not easily perceptible to the eye of the ordinary observer. But it was only too palpable to him who knew it — too positive testimony, too damaging evidence for the unfortunate Hassan's peace of mind.

"O Allah! Allah!" he sobbed.

So absorbed was he, he did not notice Murad as, with a sulky crestfallen air, he arose, shook himself like a dog, brushed the dust from his uniform, and commenced to consider his bruises. How surprised was the latter to see Hassan, after his long and earnest study of the precious amulet, which had been the cause of so much trouble, suddenly, with a violent gesture and loud imprecation, dash it on the floor, evidently intending to crush it into pieces beneath the heel of his boot.

There seemed to be a fatality about it, for when Hassan proceeded, in his hopeless grief and indignation, to carry out his intention of trampling it into fragments, it was not to be seen. It had rebounded and disappeared; and, though he diligently searched for it, he could not find it.

"Where can it be? It must be somewhere here," he said, provoked.

"It is bewitched," said Murad. "Or it does not intend thee to have it," he added, with a sarcastic smile.

"It has gone to Shaitân, where it belongs!" exclaimed Hassan.

Ah, had he but known the truth, how differently he would have spoken and felt! How he would have searched for that little boss of nacre, as the pearl of great price, till he had found it, — and how passionately he would have cherished it, all his life! But it seemed to be as Murad had said — it was bewitched — there was a fatality about it.

Perhaps the soothsayers, or diviners of the occult would have declared it was all due to what had transpired in a moment of time — at the making of it — that instant when the tool slipped and marred the starry emblem. For there are those who still believe that the little while in which the translucent drop is falling in the clepsydra — that starveling present of ours, the infinitesimal sparklet-flash of time which marks the apparent segregation of soul and its entrance into the individual, the trembling flicker of the shadow of the stylus cast on the unbounded dial of the universe, which denotes when anything is made or done, — an eternity behind it, an eternity before it, eternity surrounding it, — that this defines and influences all the future of that being or thing. They point us to "an hour's defect of the rose"; the injury, through a little insect, to the acorn, which cankers the coming oak from its very heart, and dwarfs or deforms it forever; and to a multitude of similar facts.

However this may be, certain it is that the inanimate things of this world of ours have often a strange and unaccountable relation and influence with reference to man and his life, though we are given to treating the matter contemptuously, and calling belief in it superstition. Has not a certain great writer admitted that there is an innate depravity in inanimate objects which is beyond explanation?

CHAPTER XL

"ONE woe treads upon the heels of another woe. Hath it not passed into a proverb that misfortune cometh not alone?"

So spake Hassan in the bitterness of his soul.

The cruellest thing that can befall man had happened to him. He had lost a believing heart. In all that he had gone through, in all the troubles he had suffered hitherto, this had been left him to sustain and support him. But now — now he was indeed alone.

All the rest of that fateful day he was in a turmoil of distress. He performed his duties perfunctorily, as if in a dream. He did not know, half the time, what he was doing. His comrades noticed his abstraction, but they said nothing. They had long learned to respect his strength, if nothing more; and with some of them there was a kindlier feeling — they had begun to like and love him.

At last the night fell with its moonless darkness and its sleepy stillness born of exhaustion. But it brought him no relief. It was for him a continual nightmare — a rhapsody of horror with persistent variations on the same cruel theme.

What efforts he made to free himself from the serpent coil that was strangling him! At intervals he told himself he might be mistaken — that there was still hope. He almost believed it, he longed so that it might be true. Then he cursed himself for duping himself. It was hoping against hope. It was tampering with the great Libra, whose balance-beam, standing immutably level in the highest heaven, is forever the measure of Supreme justice. The terrible strain towards the close when, from the height of the glad certainty he had clasped at the beginning, he was dashed down into the black vortex of despair, when it at last appeared that all must be given up, seemed too much for mortal flesh to endure.

How long he had hoped. Yet in the midst of his

phantom hopes he had tried to be prepared for the worst, and, in spite of appearances, had often told himself he must not be too sure. But he deceived himself. The unbelievable had happened. How could he or any other man be prepared, in such a case? It was impossible for him to school himself so thoroughly as to be ready to resign, utterly and in a moment, that which he had so earnestly striven for, which he held within his grasp, and which permeated every fibre of his being. Poor flesh and blood, must you be lifted up into the form of man to have "the question" put with inquisitorial torture? Must, too, the soul as well as the body be racked and riven?

The dread revulsion came. It was as if some one had smitten him on the face while he was too weak to raise his hand to protect himself. Then the sickening fainting of the heart, when all must be acknowledged — the sinking, gone sensation. He knew not where he was, or what to do. He was bewildered — lost.

Where was his religion — Islâm, Resignation?

Like many another, he did not turn to it till he had reached the lowest pass. Then he bethought him of the words he had often said to himself in time of trouble: "Despair is infidelity." A voice within him seemed to speak to him, — seemed to call from out his soul and say: "There is never a road as long as that — never a road nor a place where the man cannot turn to God, and recognise and call upon Him as his Father, his Begetter, his Creator, the one altogether responsible for his being — He who laid his foundations from the beginning, and who knows all his parts, his strengths and his weaknesses, as none other can know them. Love is the first and fear the last thing to think of in such a relation."

When the morning came, as it inevitably must and did come, it found Hassan, to outward appearance, much as other men are. He heard the drum-taps, the bugle sounded; he yawned, and turned, and stretched his great limbs (how strong and wholesome he was!); he sprang out of bed and, one of a number, began to dress. The washing of himself, and the putting on

the rest of his clothing and uniform were promptly and quickly done. He was at last in shape, topped off with red fez. He turned out on time with the others for inspection and parade, and was at once under duty and orders. All was routine once more. Nothing uncommon was observable about him. He was again a machine, and went through all the motions and evolutions as usual with satisfaction. The poor burdened body carried the aching heart well, and helped to keep his secret. He was only a little pale.

"What of that," was the careless jest. "Many a stout man is pale after a night's debauch."

As the current of the day flowed on he floated with it. He was with the others, his comrades, and did as they did. He heard their coarse, and often broad and unseemly talk. They illustrated it with many apt instances. He pondered.

"It was the old story," one said. They were talking about women. "Was it not so from the beginning? The man was not so much to blame. The woman tempted him. Poor beguiled fellow, what could he do? Ah, Eva, Eva!"

Hassan, hitherto, on such occasions, had generally been silent, or had taken the opposite side. In telling their prurient stories they had received no assistance from him. And now he remained grave, and said but little, till they gradually drew him out, and compelled him to break his reticence.

"Yes, it is true," he said. "They are all daughters of Eva and Delilah. Deceitful beyond imagination, who could know them? Not the wisest man. Did they not lead astray and pervert Suleyman the Wise and Samson the strong? A man is helpless as a child before them."

The cynical word spoken, a flood of vituperation followed. It was like the letting-out of water long pent up, and flowed apace. In his wrath he said more than he intended or believed: had he not heard those who knew say thus and so? Yea, had he not known, of his own experience?

Then, naturally, his mind reverted to his recent

encounter with Murad. He could scarcely avoid applying the doctrine of woman's corrupt power to his own case. And, as he silently reviewed the facts and the details in the premises, and thought of how severely he had punished Murad, and how the fellow since had gone limping, and that he might have been killed, moreover that he had never made complaint, a strange feeling almost approaching sympathy or pity towards the man who, he conceived, had robbed him of love and honour, arose within him.

"After all, he was not so much to blame," soliloquised Hassan. "How could an exception be made in his disfavour? Surely it could not. It would not be just. It was with Murad as with others. He had been tempted. He was no worse than other men. Besides he did not know the gravity of his offence. It was the woman who had committed the great wrong, who had violated the most sacred relationship, who had sinned against love and every instinct of truth, faith and purity."

Yes, it was quite plain. As Hassan brooded over it, his indignation rose to such a pitch against her, piling up, mountain high, the iniquity of which she had been guilty, that he felt the sin of Murad was comparatively insignificant.

In this mood he caught sight of the crippled man, who was at a little distance, and with a sudden impulse went up to him.

Seeing Hassan approach, Murad's pride was touched; it galled him to have it appear how hurt he was, and he tried to conceal the limp with which he was still afflicted, drawing himself up in as erect a carriage as, under the circumstances, he could assume. Expecting his conqueror to go by without speaking, he stood aside, well out of the way.

When Hassan perceived the battered shape and unhappy condition of him who so recently had been his close friend and pleasant companion, with whom he had spent many an agreeable hour, an added pang of regret smote him, and quickened his footsteps.

Murad, having in his person but too many reminders

of Hassan's onslaught upon him, viewed this sudden approach of his powerful comrade with grave suspicion. It could surely bode him no good, he thought; and his hand involuntarily sought his weapon.

"Does he come to finish me?" he muttered.

But Hassan's friendly salutation soon disabused Murad's mind.

Though unprepared for this turn of affairs, through force of habit Murad mechanically returned the salutation.

"Ah, thou art hurt, Murad! I am sorry, and ashamed of myself. I did not think it was so serious. I acted like a brute. I have hurt thee badly."

"Nay, it is nothing," replied Murad, in a rather gruff voice; for, mentally and physically, he yet felt sore at the result of their encounter, though he would not acknowledge it.

"It was close work, and called out my utmost strength," said Hassan. "I gave thee more than I otherwise would have done. A weaker man would have escaped. Thou art a fierce fighter."

"Thou didst attack me without any cause," said Murad. "I spake to thee as one friend to another; and suddenly, without reason, or the least provocation, thou calledst me by such vile names as no man could bear — as if I were a dog, or the dirt beneath thy feet."

Hassan hung his head. His face coloured. He could not explain.

"I have done wrong; I come to apologise," he answered, after a short interval. "Forgive me. I am sorry. I knew not what I did. Let us say no more about it. Have I not told thee I repent of it?"

"Yea, yea. Did I hurt thee much?"

"Thou gavest me all I could do. But I escaped well."

Murad took Hassan's proffered hand, and together they walked to the rough quarters.

"Thou seest I am slightly lame," now remarked Murad confidentially, ready and willing to be reconciled to his formidable friend.

The stout fellow strutted along, trying to hide the defect with his swagger, in which he was not very successful.

"It is unfortunate. I am much to blame."

"Oh it is but a trifle! I shall be all right in a day or two."

"Thou hast been my best friend, Murad. Thou hast opened my eyes. Why should I refuse to acknowledge it? I have acted like a fool."

Murad did not understand these words. But as he was conscious of having deceived Hassan, though not with evil intent, he remained silent, anxious to smooth matters. Quite ignorant of the mischief he had wrought, he saw no reason why he should confess as to the mythical character of the love-affair he had painted in such glowing colours. And surely he would not wish to say it was all a falsehood. His pride forbade.

About this time it was rumoured among the soldiers that Hassan had a most ungovernable temper when excited, — that without any special provocation he would give free sweep to it, and woe be to the man who then came in his way, or offended him. Others said he was changed in his nature.

"He is not the same man he was a while ago," was how they expressed it.

Chalîl, who knew him so well, noticed the change, though he imagined not the cause. Hassan maintained an unbroken silence on the subject, which Chalîl respected, and assigned the peculiarity to some of the minor cares and evils which have the habit of attacking mankind too often to be made the subject of remark. Besides, Chalîl had sorrows of his own. Men have certain troubles which they generally have self-respect enough to keep to themselves.

When Chalîl met Hassan, the latter now never mentioned Hilwe's name, which was rather a relief to the former. Hassan was a brave man; but, as we have seen, on this subject he was sensitive and timid to cowardice.

"Hast thou heard from our country?" Chalîl once asked him.

"Nay," Hassan replied. "I have written thrice; but have not heard. I now do not expect to hear."

"They are not accustomed to writing."

This was said apologetically by Chalîl, who himself was no scribe, and who began to think Hassan's sadness was connected with his not hearing from home.

"Yea; they are not accustomed to writing," mechanically repeated Hassan with a sigh.

Up in the mountains he felt happier. He seemed to have left his sad thoughts behind, on the plain. Away — alone — or comparatively alone — it was the next thing to freedom. Those "everlasting hills" had taught him many a lesson. They, too, had reminded him of many a piece of wisdom he had learned on the hillsides in Palestine, and had soothed his heart in his bitterest moments. The incursions into the upland plains and highlands required much caution and endurance, and often long watching and patient waiting. But Hassan's shepherd life had inured him to this.

The wild animals and birds were a joy to him. He made the acquaintance of many a flower and herb pleasant to the eye, or of kindly use. Among the latter was that much-esteemed vulnerary of ancient fame, the dittany, which grows so abundantly on Mount Ida and Mount Dicte, and with which the classic heroes healed their wounds, in which our modern heroes followed their example. This is the plant of which, as Virgil tells us, the wild goats eat when they are shot with darts, — apparently instructed of Nature.

Hassan, too, was wounded — smitten to the heart; but, alas! his was a wound no dittany that ever grew could heal. Yet he could well believe the marvellous stories told of the renowned plant, its valuable qualities and high virtues; and he was certain he had perceived the sprays of leaves and large white or rose-coloured blossoms exhale a fragrant volatile air, so inflammable that it flashed like a beam of light in the darkness.

"This is to guide the wounded creature to them in the night," Hassan had said, in his simplicity.

It is not difficult to see and to believe such things, and stranger things than these, when abiding in lonely boundless places — away from the haunts of men — where the senses are attuned to a finer use.

Hassan's being able to read and write, not to mention his lingual accomplishments, united with his activity and valour, had been appreciated, and finally had produced results in his favour, gradually working his promotion. It came slowly — very slowly; but how welcome it was!

With his natural faculty of acquiring languages, he had added not a few Greek words to his vocabulary — Greek being the language chiefly spoken in the island — and soon he could make himself understood by the natives in communicating with them.

He had learning, scanty as it was, which some of the officers in command of him lacked. They therefore were glad to fall back on him occasionally, and take advantage of the young soldier's knowledge. In this way as well as in other ways he was made use of in various emergencies, on special expeditions.

It was an interesting sight to see him, mounted on horseback — his bronze, sheath-like inkstand or ink-holder with its writing reeds thrust into his sash — rapidly inditing some important communication, the paper held corner-wise on his hand, Arabic fashion.

He distinguished himself in several fiercely-fought skirmishes with the Sphakiots — foemen worthy of his steel, whom it was almost impossible to dislodge from their fastnesses in the hills. Those strong piercing eyes of his had the courage and the vengeance of the old Canaanite gods in them, and were as a flame of fire going before him and terrifying the hearts of his enemies.

Are not the gods of every people composed of the qualities they admire in their great men?

But every one who knew Hassan said he was a changed being.

"He is daring to recklessness," they said, "and sets no value on his life."

About this time a fair, low-browed Greek woman,

with eyes of heavenly blue, moved across the scene. It was no more, or but little more, than that.

Hassan perhaps smiled upon her — went with her. Is it any wonder? She made herself as a devouring flame of beauty for him.

"Is he not as other men?" she said. "I shall have him."

But notwithstanding his supposed wrong at Hilwe's hands, he thought of her, his first and only love, and in his heart he was true, and gave himself not away.

Murad went wild over the stately Greek, and raved about the tall golden-haired woman, and ridiculed Hassan for his constancy toward an absent ideal. But it was of no use. Hassan was at heart unmoved. A man cannot explain, even to himself, some of the simplest acts of his own nature — that dominant one, who will have her own way in spite of everything.

Murad was comparatively as naught to the beautiful Greek when she looked on Hassan. She would have given her soul to gain the handsome giant.

"Is he not formed like one of our ancient Olympic gods?" she said. "I could die for such a man!"

Without him she felt incomplete, neglected, and mocked at by her own beauty that had failed to enthral him, binding him, helpless, heart and soul, as she wanted him, in fetters at her feet.

CHAPTER XLI

WHEN next Kadra visited Hilwe in her hiding-place in the Valley of Ain Kârim, which was but a few days after her last visit, there was that in the face and manner of the "wise woman" which at once revealed that all was not well. She scarce could contain herself as she went through the customary long salutations.

"Woe is me!" she said, "how shall I tell thee? or how shall my lips speak it? Better had I been born dumb, so that thou shouldst not have heard it."

"I beseech thee, Kadra, for the sake of the love between us, to tell me. I perceive thy mind is troubled with something. Hide nothing from me. I can bear it."

As Hilwe spoke, Kadra had fallen upon her neck and was weeping bitterly.

"Yea, Hilwe, thou needs must know. Nor can I withhold it from thee. Amne is dead!"

"Is dead?"

"Alas, it is true! They have slain her. The cruel and wicked men of Malha have done her to death. They have destroyed her and her little one. And they that are nearest to her of her people were the leaders, and were foremost in the work."

Hilwe had laid her little Talmai aside; but now that she heard these terrible words, she took him in her arms, and folded him to her breast.

"Oh! how could they do it?" she said. "I can scarce believe it."

"Thou mayest well say that, Hilwe. Even now I ask myself, Can it all be true? But it all is true — too true."

"How did they find her? And how did they capture her?"

Both the women, clasped in each other's arms, were trembling and weeping as Kadra answered, resuming her weird relation.

"It seems the stranger Giaour who had taken Amne to be with him, and who was kind and good to her, for she wanted for nothing, was a young man of high birth, a nobleman, and had much riches. I say not this to excuse her, nor to justify that in her which was wrong. The man went on a long journey, intending to be gone many days; and this was the time taken by the men of Malha for the capture of Amne.

"They had tracked her out long before, and more than once had tried to abduct her without succeeding. But this time, under pretence that some one of her folk at Malha was sick unto death and calling for her, they persuaded her to go with them. This they did with great secrecy and cunning. Taking her child,

she went, without suspecting their purpose, and expecting to return immediately."

"Ah, how cruel! — how wicked!" exclaimed Hilwe.

"Yea; but what couldst thou look for from them? They never took her to Malha. That is certain. They probably hid her in one of their caves. Who knows? The rest was told by Nigme, — the despised Nigme, Abd-el-nour's wife. As thou knowest, her mind of late has never been clear, and since this it is worse than ever."

It seemed, from Kadra's narration, that Nigme, wandering off in search of brush for fuel, had gone out of her way, and found herself within the borders of the Black Wady.

This spot, a desolate hollow among barren rocks, has a most forbidding aspect. Tradition associates it with indescribable horrors and misfortunes, and peoples it with malevolent sprites, the jinns and ghouls; so that it is generally avoided by the superstitious fellaheen, who, in coming and going, are apt to give it a wide berth, especially at night.

Before apprehending where she was, Nigme perceived she was close to a group of men, who had with them a young woman and a child. The woman was evidently in great distress, and pleaded piteously from time to time with the men, who treated her with unrelenting harshness.

Terrified at the position in which she found herself, and identifying the young woman as Amne, and the other members of the group as men of Malha, Nigme hid herself behind a mass of rock, from where, without being seen, she could watch their proceedings. She clung to the rocks, overwhelmed with fear, realising the unholy action of these men and that, should they discover her spying on them, they would surely slay her rather than that she should escape with their secret. Her strength left her, so that she could scarcely move.

They had been digging a pit-like hole, in which task they had spelled each other, and now were rapidly completing the work. The entire scene had an omin-

ous meaning that, beyond words, was ghastly and inhuman.

Seated with her son upon an adjacent ledge of rock, Amne continued to entreat them to have pity upon her.

"Let me and my child go," she pleaded; "we shall never again trouble you. Into whatever land you send us we will depart. Our faces shall never more be seen of you. In a far-off country we shall be strangers among strangers. Let our names be blotted out of remembrance."

"Ask the winds, — cry unto the rocks to help thee. They will hear and deliver thee sooner than thou canst move us from our purpose," was their reply. "Thy lover, the Giaour who humbled thee, hath deserted thee. He hath forsaken thee, and cast thee off; and Allah hath given thee into our hands to deal with thee according to thy deserts."

"O Allah! have I sinned against thee?" she cried. "And is this my punishment? Wilt thou be wroth with such a poor creature as I am, to inflict such misery and agony upon me, and to permit me to fall into the power of the destroyers? Have mercy! Or, if I have sinned, what evil hath this little child done that he should suffer?"

The words were uttered in a wailing, despairing voice, like the cry of the hunted creature tracked to its lair, from which there is no escape. It was a prayer, though she knew it not. It was an appeal to God from the wrath of the cruel men who held her. She had expostulated with her obdurate persecutors till her voice had become strangely, unnaturally hoarse, and strained with the anguish of her torment. They heeded her not.

"Hold thy peace!" they said. "Thou mayest as well. Thy doom is fixed. That which is written of thee shall be accomplished."

They had determined from the first on their course, and were not to be dissuaded from it. There was no pity for her in their savage breasts.

Long before had they taken from her her ornaments

and the costly raiment — the robe of her shame, as they called it — in which they had captured her, and had put upon her other and despicable apparel. She wore the shabby garments of the poorest peasant. She had been humiliated repeatedly, in numerous ways.

The hole they had dug for her was deep and narrow. It gaped darkly before her. She shivered as she saw it. She, who had been so full of warm, bounding life and love, — how could she reconcile herself to it?

It did not lessen the horror, that she knew her fate — saw it prepared for her.

A certain preconcerted signal was given. They tore her child from her clinging arms. In an instant they had seized her and plunged her into the earth. Her struggles were as nothing in their powerful grasp. They filled in the soil about her deliberately. Their stern, implacable attitude was appalling; it was as paralysing as it was devilish.

She was buried up to her neck in the dark and narrow pit.

They did not content themselves with this. They assailed her with grim mockery:

"Thou didst think to go delicately all thy life, while thy reproach lay upon us to disgrace us. Ah, by Allah, that may not be! It did not satisfy thee to give thyself up to ordinary wantonness. Thou must make thyself notoriously abominable. Thou must suffer a dog of a Giaour to humble thee. The dishonour must be blotted out. There is but one way, as thou well knowest. And this base-born thing — the child of shamefulness, the spawn of the Giaour — shall perish with thee."

They took the little one, stripping the simple clothes from him till he was naked.

He was a beautiful boy, such as would gladden any mother's heart. Poor Amne had worshipped and petted him. Though he was naturally patient and quiet, their rough treatment made him fret and whimper. The love that is greater than all love but one, stirred in her bleeding heart, and out of the

midst of her wretchedness she called him by a pet name and tried to comfort him. He stretched eagerly his tiny hands to her, his faithful protector — no longer able to protect.

She had shed her last tears. Her burning eyes were dry as a potsherd, and staring wildly with horror. Every moment she expected to have the life crushed out of her. But when she saw her child in such peril, all her motherly instinct cried aloud. She wrenched her imprisoned arms loose, with a power that in her state seemed superhuman — with the last fainting energies of her being she reached out to her child, imploringly, those bruised and torn limbs that so often had fondled him.

"Do as thou wilt with me!" she cried — "kill me! but spare the child! He will grow up with the flocks and herds. He will be no more to thee than a kid of the pasture. Spare him, for the love of Allah!"

All was in vain. He who was drawn by lot to do the accursed deed, ruthlessly seized the child, and, before the eyes of the hapless mother, dashed out its brains against the rocks.

Then, from that forlorn mother went out such a cry as those hills and valleys had never heard since the Christ in his awful redemptive passion had yielded up the ghost.

There were no other words — there could be none. Her life and her soul had gone out into her child to suffer with him. She was already as one that is all but dead.

The self-appointed executioners, standing around, armed with fragments of rock, prepared to stone her to death, commencing with the chief accuser, hurled them in succession upon her. Her feeble hand went up involuntarily, — it was but Nature's protest. She knew not what she did. There was one wild shriek, and all was over.

An almost simultaneous cry went up from the distraught Nigme, who could no longer restrain it. The men, hearing this, were alarmed, and looked around on all sides suspiciously.

"Some one answers her cry," said a Malhaite.

"Nay, it is but the echo," said another.

"Rather it is the jinn waiting for her," said a third.

There was not an expression of regret. None said, "Alas, my sister!"

The merciless deed was done. The head that had been carried so daintily had all its beauty — all semblance of humanity crushed out of it.

Light of light, God of grace, can such things be permitted of thee? Canst thou look down and let them be perpetrated? And can human beings be so cruel? Can human nature be without compassion, tears, or feeling? How could it heap such misery on a poor, frail creature, its own flesh and blood, that, without ruth or pity or relenting touch of mercy, it would rive the soul out of the helpless, trembling body, powerless to resist, in the outer darkness of hopelessness, and not even spare the infant at the breast?

One of another race and creed, once looking down upon the forbidding, savage desolation of the spot, intensified by the deed of blood, the hideous secret which it held in its gloomy bosom, — it seemed to him the exponent of the ancient direful thought — ("Is it not written?" he said) — "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." "Is it not written in the sacred book?" he asked, and to himself made answer: "Yea, and more the pity. It never was in God's heart. The old Hebrew had in him an immense capacity for hatred and cruelty. That is all it shows. He made his God to suit him, a God of jealousy, revenge, deceit and bloody murder. No decent, civilised man would have such a God."

Unfortunate Amne, stray bird of summer, short-lived was thy happiness! — short, ah, how short the pleasure of thy darkened existence, and the end, a barbarous death at the hands of thine own kindred!

At the close of her fearful narration, of which this is but a feeble summary, Kadra was much overcome. She had told the direful story with a swelling heart, and in burning words, impossible to render, accom-

panied with the most violent gesticulations, and often interrupted, by both herself and Hilwe, with scathing denunciations of the murderers. She held Hilwe's hand, and tried to comfort her in the death of her companion.

"Amne is gone, Hilwe. We cannot bring her back. It is now for us to consider the living who are in danger of a like fate, and to do all in our power to deliver them."

Thus spake the wise woman, and added: "I dare not hide it from thee, Hilwe. Thy life and the life of thy child are no longer safe in this place. The men of blood are upon thy track. Haste thee, delay not; take the young child and flee; lest they come upon thee suddenly, and do unto thee as they have done unto Amne!"

No matter how we may prepare ourselves for the words of doom, when they are spoken, they fall upon our ears with a shock. Words give the thoughts an embodiment they hitherto failed to possess, as acts give to words their full substance. A word can slay like a stiletto.

"Alas! what shall become of me and the child?" was Hilwe's outcry. "Yet will I do in all things as thou dost advise."

"I have brought thee such provision as I could spare, or lay my hands on. It is as much as thou canst well carry with the child, and will last thee for many a day."

Hilwe would have thanked her, but Kadra would not let her.

"Nay," she said, "thou hast no need to thank me. Have I not promised? Besides, easily can I spare the food, and there is no time now for further words if thou wouldst get well upon thy way, and find shelter for the night ere the day closes. I shall see thee upon thy journey; and when thou art safe beyond the village, I shall not take leave of thee till I have pointed out the direction thou shouldst go in."

"I am in the hands of Allah," meekly responded Hilwe, while she hastened to make the few necessary preparations for her flight.

CHAPTER XLII

"AM I not in the hands of Allah?" Hilwe repeated, less as a question than a confident assertion, as she stood watching the retreating figure of Kadra, who had just parted from her. The village of Ain Kârim, in its peaceful valley, lay beneath, enveloped in its profusion of olive-groves, gardens and orchards. She could still distinguish the place of the fountain, the monastery of Spanish monks, and the ruins by the cave, besides many another well-known spot. It had left with her a bitter-sweet memory; for there she had become a mother. It was to her like the little book in the Apocalypse, which the angel gave to St. John the Beloved, — sweet as honey, yet bitter. Now, as she halted and looked down upon the quiet place, and thought of the days she had spent there, contrasting them with the cares and uncertainties immediately opening before her, the bitter seemed less and the sweet more. Is it not ever so with us, sad pilgrims? The atmosphere of memory is a pleasing illusion, and aids us to paint of a rosy hue that which we yearn to consider happiness in the past.

But she must not delay. With a last fond look, she turned and took the pathway across the hills. She remembered the advice of Kadra: "Were it not that in thy case it is different, I should say to thee, travel the highway, though it be round about. It may prove the shortest way, after all. Rather might I advise thee, — go not by the travelled way, lest thou meet with the profane. But thou must be guided by circumstances."

The load was heavy upon her, — carrying the child and the provisions; but the same cheerful nature as ever was within her.

"Each day the load will grow a little lighter," she said, and hastened on her way.

She looked upon the bright side, and did not appear to consider the fact that this growing a little lighter

meant the lessening of her scanty store of food, and being thrown upon her own exertions for the supply of her daily wants.

There was in Hilwe a sublime submission to her fate, — an acquiescence which is characteristic of the people of the land. It may be described as an acceptance of all trouble or affliction, ascribing it to the Supreme Power, in a spirit of which the Oriental alone seems capable. In Palestine this is seen in its highest development in the Mohammedan, to whose religious fatalism probably may be attributed some of his feeling and belief. But the land is pervaded, — saturated with the sentiment. The acknowledgment of God in everything reaches a height, and carries with it a deference to the Divine Will unknown in western lands.

Undoubtedly there are exceptions to this. Perhaps, too, it may be said of them as of others, even of Christians: "This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." Yet it is doubtful if the European or American Christian often, if ever, practically reaches in his daily life such a thorough realisation of God-with-man, as does the poorest and most ignorant peasant of Palestine, savage and barbaric in many ways as we may deem him to be.

"It is Allah."

This is said and felt when in the most bitter grief and sorrow, with folded hands and complete resignation to the decree of the All-Merciful and All-Wise ruler of the universe. It recalls the words of Samuel of old: "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

So it was with Hilwe. She said, not only with her lips but in her heart, "It is the will of Allah," and went upon her unknown and often pathless way, strengthened, refreshed and comforted.

These rocks and hollows had heard the voice of the Forerunner of the Messiah. Here he had been born and bred, the influences of the place and people entering into him. He knew every domed summit and every dimpled vale from his boyhood. Here he had become as the voice of God, the voice of one crying in

the wilderness, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Prepare ye the way of the Lord." And all the people of this hill-country of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, had flocked to hear him, — for all men considered John a prophet.

But that day — and to them it was a great day — is past and gone. Nearly two thousand years lie between it and us. And still the prayer ascends: "Thy Kingdom come." And the Christ has told us, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, if you would but know it."

As the wind swept through the rocky passes, the grand volume of sound came to Hilwe as the hymning of a holy company, and the cooling touch, as of an angel's hand, rested in blessing on her heated brow.

The brave young mother, with her little son, had many a weary tramp through the thistles and briers, the thorny brush and rough, flinty byways, and sometimes her bleeding feet left a trail of pain to mark her steps. Often the water was spent in her bottle, and she did not always venture near the village wells, to replenish it, not knowing what trouble it might bring upon her.

She was often obliged to wait long on the outskirts of villages and small towns, watching an opportunity to visit the well or fountain of the place unobserved. More than once, when parched with thirst, she had entered the cemetery belonging to some village, and, resting in the shade of the great trees which adorned it, was glad to avail herself of the water which had gathered in the cup-like hollows in the tombstones, made there according to the beautiful Oriental custom, so that when it rains the water may collect in them for the birds to drink, which it is believed brings a blessing to the dead. Moslems and Jews believe in praying for the dead.

"We are stray birds," she would say, as she moistened the lips of her little one, and stooped and drank from the receptacles. "Have we not fallen out of the nest, and become lost? Shall we, too, not drink, and bless the dead?"

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, she sometimes wandered out of the way and retraced her steps unwottingly, not knowing where she was till she identified some prominent landmark, and so, after much loss of time and labour, recovered the direction she would go in.

At night she was happy if she found a shelter, however rude, to cover their heads. A cavity in the rocks was hailed with delight by her for this purpose.

Her devotion to her child was extraordinary.

"Ever I hear Hassan speaking to me, and saying, 'Hilwe, take care of my child,'" were the words she constantly repeated. "Ah! how could I forget? But would that Hassan were here!"

Once she discovered, adjoining a Christian hamlet, a dismantled old mosque, where she found peace and rest through the soft nocturnal hours. Here, too, she had the luxury of a light, for in the niche, at one end of the mosque, was piled a large number of earthen lamps, the offering of relatives or friends of the sick, who from time to time had brought lighted lamps and placed them there, as votive tributes accompanying prayer for the invalid. So great is the force of custom that even Christians, in the case of sickness of a member of their family, often bring lighted lamps to the mosque. There they were, certainly, those primitive light-givers, in evidence of the fact, — some having the oil spilled, others with half-consumed wicks hanging out languidly; but all dismally deficient in the φῶς for which the Greek inscriptions upon some of them pronounced them excellent, declaring that they gave good light.

Hilwe quickly appropriated one of those shallow, earthen Hespers, lighting and applying it to the useful and legitimate purpose of scattering the shadows in the old mosque, which soon were swaying to and fro, grotesquely and threateningly, high up upon the fine groined roof, which was one of those masterpieces of the Palestine masons, to whom they are peculiar. In truth, there seems to be a marvellous skill in the structure of those severe but grandly simple ceilings, for

which those men are said to have no mathematical formula, they working by the eye with exactness, though apparently with the crudest methods. It is something very like genius, transmitted from father to son for generations. They keep the royal secret well, whatever it is; and it is believed no other masons can do such work. It is as natural and complete as the blossoming of a flower.

The light was a great comfort to Hilwe, as she prepared her scanty evening meal from her much diminished store, and then arranged her sleeping-place. She fell asleep, her boy in her arms, watching the lights and shadows as they clasped and unclasped, materialised and melted, each running into the other, till it was impossible to follow them among the arches and curved lines of that mysterious ceiling, and her tired eyes halted in the vain pursuit, and shortly her eyelids drooped and closed. The last broken thought which passed through her mind she remembered was the old saying with its covert meaning: "One cannot see the lamp except by the light of it."

"How true it is," she thought and muttered, with only a vague impression of the words, and a blurred image of the lamp before her. "It is only by the light of his deeds that a man is seen and known."

Then her inner consciousness passed into the land of dreams. She was in a garden of lilies, asphodels and roses, and the pure "white blooms" swayed to and fro with a sacred rhythm. Hassan was there; he stooped and kissed her; and, presently, Talmai was with them. Oh, what joy! What splendour of love! What glory of form and colour and perfume on every side! She was ravished with it all. Then it gradually faded away, and vanished altogether. It is always so.

When she awoke it was another day, but still dark, — very dark within the mosque, for the lamp had gone out. It took her some moments to recall where she was. Sleeping in a different place each night was confusing. But the consciousness of the necessity of vigilance was at once with her. That was ever with

her now. Even in her sleep some sense of it remained. Awaking, she was thoroughly awake as to that.

The brave, cheerful soul, perceiving the cause of the darkness, cried, "Ah, how quick thou art to desert me!" and then, quoted the familiar proverb, "But no one's lamp burns till morning."

She immediately arose, and, looking out, saw that faint gray pallor in the eastern sky that tells of the approaching dawn. Knowing what early risers the fellaheen are, that they go to bed with the sun and rise with the sun, she seized her water-bottle, and, taking her little son upon her back, for she dared not leave him alone, hastened to the fountain, filled the vessel, and returned to the mosque without meeting any one. She considered herself fortunate, while she prepared and ate a most slender breakfast, and then nursed her child in the open air, in the little court of the building, which was neatly paved, and scrupulously clean.

The mosque was built on rising ground — the most prominent and desirable spot in the village; and in the centre of the level court, before it, spread a fine terebinth tree, like a green umbrella or sacred canopy, shading every foot of space in the attractive inclosure.

Situated as Hilwe was, it was impossible but that care and anxiety at times should be her unwelcome companions. As she bared the soft hemisphere of her argent breast to her boy, the sacred fountain of his nutriment gave not forth as abundantly as usual, nor as freely as he desired the sweet supply. He was a strong lusty child, uncommonly large for his age, and the constant outdoor life had aided his robust development. His steady growth required a steady increase of nourishment; and latterly Hilwe stinted herself to eke out the scanty residue of her provisions, with the result that Talmai had not all he wanted. The little fellow, taught by nature, put up his clenched, baby fist, bringing such pressure to bear as he could employ; just as the lambkins in the fields butt the udders of the mother-sheep to encourage the flow of the milk.

The tears filled Hilwe's eyes, as she bent over him lovingly, and understood the trouble.

"I have defrauded thee," she said. "Allah forgive me for not trusting him more. Yet I did it for the best. I have refrained from satisfying my hunger, fearing to run out of food; and now, behold, I am starving thee, my son."

The boy looked up at the sound of her voice, dropped the rosy nipple from between his lips, and smiled in her face.

"Ah, how good-natured and pleasant thou art about it," she said, hugging and kissing him. "Thou art Hassan over again. Thou art his living image. Would that he could see thee!"

Hitherto Hilwe had adhered, as closely as possible, to Kadra's advice to loiter not by the way, and to avoid dwelling-houses and individuals till well out of the range of country where she might be apprehended, or suspicion send back rumour of her. But the frequent losing of her way had delayed her; so had the taking of circuitous routes to avoid persons and places. This had resulted in the exhaustion of her limited store of food before she had arrived as far as had been intended. She had added occasionally to her meagre fare by gleaning grain or gathering a few fruits and herbs; and, to appease her hunger, had resorted even to eating the embryonic or immature little figs, a not unusual practice on the part of the peasant when suffering for want of food and nothing better offers; thus illustrating and explaining that difficult and perplexing passage in connection with the barren fig-tree — how that, though it was not the season of figs, the tree being a healthy tree and full of leaves, Christ might well have expected to find upon it this early imperfect fruit, sufficient to relieve his wants.

The laws of hospitality in this country are very broad and generous. The habits of ages have built up and sanctified their unwritten code — for to these fellaheen it is unwritten. To this day it is regarded as nothing unusual for the stranger, the wayfarer, and traveller, when needing food, to pluck the ears of wheat and eat them, rubbing them in their hands, a custom old as the days of Moses, and exercised in the

time of Christ, being recorded of his disciples. It is common to see the mounted traveller pause by the edges of the open unfenced cornfields, and give his horse "a bite" of the growing crop.

Hilwe's opportunities in this direction, owing to her fear of being discovered, were not as numerous as otherwise they might have been. Yet her acquaintance with the life of the pasture enabled her sometimes to secure the milk from some stray she-goat of the flocks, over which she had cast her gentle spell, the creature gladly yielding to her soothing manipulations.

Thus had she managed to support herself and her son, and, with her patient spirit, felt she hitherto had not fared so very badly. Till now the food had never got so low in her sack.

As she sat before the carved doorway of the mosque, the dawn began to broaden, and nearer objects stood out more distinctly from the shadowy background. She looked longingly towards the houses of the village clustering in groups, somewhat different from Moslem villages, the well-kept vineyards and gardens lying around them.

"There is plenty within those gates," she said; "they have enough to eat and to spare, while I want." And as she thought of her child, she strongly inclined to ask for aid at this thrifty place — this "house of abundance," as she called it. Still, when it came to the point, she shrank from doing so, and averted her eyes from the boy, lest the sight of him should tempt her overmuch.

"I have heard the Nazarenes are kind, and helpful, and hurt no one," she murmured. "But — who can tell?"

The force of prejudice asserted itself; she hesitated.

"I have still a little food left," she added presently, persistently turning her gaze away from her young one, and fixing it on the village. "Why should I beg from a Giaour, a Kaffir — an unbeliever?"

Looking toward the east, she saw the cold white gleam, the immediate footsteps of the coming day. It

was a warning. Soon the crimson streaks would stream up, ray-like, where the sun was to rise.

"I have no time to lose," she said, and arose hurriedly. "I must be going."

She would have liked to linger longer in the pleasant place. But she would not let herself consider it. She could not. She dared not.

She took, as usual, a roundabout way, leaving the village a good distance to the right, to avoid all risk, lest already some of the inhabitants should be stirring. But she must needs cross the highway. Hardly had she reached the other side, when she came upon a level space of ground, where was halted a large number of camels. She was quite close to them, so close that, as she stood behind a clump of bushes, she could see distinctly the peculiar patterns and marks clipped in their creamy-white, fawn, drab, or dark gray coats by their owners, and which devices were partly for ornament, partly as a means of identification. Many of these huge beasts of burden had their heads elevated high above the bushes, and Hilwe had the impression that they noticed her, though she kept quite still, hiding behind the shrubs.

It added to her alarm that she became convinced that this was the same caravan which had passed through Ain Kârim, to which the camel-driver belonged who had spied on her and Kadra. It was now probably making its return trip. This made her the more cautious, as she perceived some of the drivers were already astir.

She heard them warning the young muleteers to keep away from the male camels:

"Seest thou not their tongues lolling out? Hear them roar. They are fierce and dangerous at this season. Do not approach them so near."

Stealthily she crept along, from bush to bush, fearing to make the least noise which might discover her. She watched the camels eat, kneeling as they had knelt for hours through the night, munching the dry musty mixture of barley and chopped straw — more straw than barley — which had been placed before them, and with

that expression of mingled discontent and maliciousness which is habitual to the uncouth but useful animal. Several of them were being reloaded by the drivers, and, under the operation, were blubbering and groaning and spitting, giving vent to an occasional louder bleat or howl, as if in remonstrance at putting any extra weight upon them. A camel knows how much it can conveniently carry, and objects strenuously to being imposed upon. From necessity, it always kneels for loading, and it is well understood the beast will refuse to rise should it consider the load too great.

As Hilwe came to where some of the provender had been spilled, she fain would have stopped and picked out the grains of barley to supply her wants and replenish her diminished store. But she knew this would be imprudent, and hastened on her way.

"Alas, little did I think it should come to this with me," she said, "that I should grudge the camel his feed, and hunger for that which the beggar despiseth."

CHAPTER XLIII

AT length the day had come when there was no more food in Hilwe's scrip. The last morsels, though carefully stinted, had been devoured, and not a crumb was left.

Of late she had been unsuccessful in obtaining grain or roots, as she had met no cultured fields. She now had wandered out of her way and was lost. The water was spent in her bottle. Faint with hunger, parched with thirst, weary from her fruitless wanderings, not knowing where she was, bewildered and perplexed, she seemed to herself as a mere nothing and of no account, in the wide stretch of land and sky surrounding her.

She turned her eyes in every direction, as though searching out some way to escape. But she could find no favourable indications. There was a blank dreari-

ness to the scene, which, in her state, might well appal her. She dragged herself to the nearest boulder, and, exhausted, sank upon it, as a tired bird might roost there.

She tried to collect herself, and to recall the directions which Kadra had so carefully given her.

"How easy and simple it all seemed to be, when she talked to me about the journey," she said; "and now — now I am lost. I know not where I am. I have so often wandered out of the way — Ah! have I not wandered out of the way?" she repeated, sorrowfully shaking her head, — "that the track is blotted out both before me and behind me; I am become as one that is foolish; and there is none to say to me: 'This is the way; walk thou in it.' Neither is there one to entreat me — 'Eat this morsel of bread, my daughter, and drink of the water from my pitcher.' How often have I given food to the stranger, and now I am an hungered and thirsty, and my little one nigh perishing of want. My eyes are darkened, so that I cannot see; and my heart is weak, and my strength wasted within me. Yet let me shut my mouth, and not murmur. Who am I that I should reproach the Creator? Will he not deliver me in due time, and sustain me for this day also?"

As, in her helplessness, she sat upon the rock, buried beneath the thoughts that pressed with such overwhelming weight upon her, with that strange mixed feeling, that often makes itself apparent in the most serious circumstances, linking the trivial with the momentous, she gradually began noticing — at first scarcely conscious of it — the mosses, lichens and ferns which grew on the sides or in the interstices of the boulder. She passed her fingers over the filmy lichens, clinging so close to their hard bed — some of a pale metallic green, silvery underneath, others brownish, or olive, or gray above, and black beneath; or those distinct patches of rich orange-colour, or of pale sulphur-yellow, adhering so perseveringly that they broke in pieces rather than be separated from their foothold — their home.

The storms of many a winter had beaten upon them, the fierce scorching suns of untold summers had smitten them in vain. They still held their ground. The heaviest torrents of the "rainy season" had failed to wash them away; the drought of the longest "dry season," when not a drop of rain fell, had not consumed them. They taught her a lesson of patience and endurance. She had known them from childhood. They, and such as they, were her holy books; for, in the literal sense of books she had none, and knew little or nothing about them. These rock-plants, from her tenderest years, were her playmates, her friends. How soft and pleasant to her touch were the feathery tufts of moss. And the tiny fronds of the baby ferns, like olive-green lace, how she wondered that they could find sustenance and an abiding place in the crannies and chinks of the flinty stone.

"Shall not I be accounted of more value than these?" she said. "Shall I not also find an abiding-place?"

She sat so still, fearing to awaken her child, that at length the living creatures began to approach her with impunity. In her naturalness was she not akin to them? A lizard ran along the rock, until close to her, and looked up into her face, inquiringly, with those clear jewel-like eyes of his emitting bronze-green, chrysolite, and ruby glints. The little crested lark flitted near, and with friendly interest, seeing no harm, drew still nearer, till within arm's-length of her, uttering his silvery confidential note, and lifting proudly his plumed coronet, with the intelligence of one who knows what he is, and that he is an honoured and welcome guest. Flocks of twittering goldfinches hovered in surprising numbers around her, and settled on the thistles, feeding on the seeds, and setting free the down that floated off upon the air, often carrying the seed away with it, the birds pursuing.

Hilwe's eyes filled with tears. All these had been long her companions; and the thought of the many happy hours she had spent with them — or hours which now seemed to her to have been happy — touched her to the quick. Once her heart had been as light as these

winged seeds; and now — now she was cast out, a stranger in a strange land, with none to give unto her or her child.

The little Talmai woke and cried. It was his feeding time. Hilwe knew and dreaded it; for she felt that Nature was withholding her kind supply, and she could not satisfy the boy. The tears now overflowed and dropped on the face of the child as, with a deep sigh she bent over him and gave him the breast.

"There is nothing in it for thee, my lambkin," she said. "Yet will I not refuse thee the comfort of it."

Then she tried to put him to sleep, singing in a gentle voice, very faint and trembling, a simple lullaby: —

> "Sleep, my little nestling, sleep;
> Not for myself, but for thee I weep.
> Though the way be rough and steep,
> Allah my precious one shall keep.
> Sleep, my little darling, sleep."

There was that slight lilting of the voice that is so telling; but how sad was her attempt at singing! — it was almost piteous. Yet the mother's love was in the song, and the soft slumberous cooing of the words soothed the boy to sleep.

She began to feel rested. The necessity of caring for and pitying another had revived and restored her. Her mind was quickened, her energy invigorated.

She perceived that the flocks of birds, after feeding, all flew mostly in one direction.

"There must be water and shelter there," she said, "else the birds would not flock thither."

She pondered awhile, her head bent, while her eyes were fixed on the distant horizon. At the point to where the birds' flight was directed, there seemed to be a low range of hills.

"I will go forward," she said. "Hath not Allah sent these winged messengers of his to point me the way? Let me be obedient, and delay not to follow them."

She was already upon her feet and hastening with

the birds that flew before her and were like guides to her. It is true their trackless way in the air led her over a trackless course on the ground, and through many rough and difficult places; but she followed their broken, intermittent flitting with unquestioning faith. These apparently desultory flights all tended one way, as she already had noticed.

Her strength seemed to have returned to her; and she pressed onward with an enthusiasm that was born of her hope. It was one of those recurrent recuperative waves of force that come to the individual almost with surprise.

"It is strange," she said, "but when the time for eating passes by, I am not so hungry. I do not mind the pangs of hunger so much."

Already she had advanced several miles. She had been wonderfully sustained, and showed remarkable endurance, no doubt in large measure to be attributed to the simple outdoor life of toil and exposure in which she had been disciplined.

Reaching the top of a ridge and looking eagerly beyond, her eyes were at last surprised and gladdened by the happy sight of a cultivated field of grain. It was but a small patch, tucked in among the rocks, in a space between the hills; but a godsend to her, and welcome beyond measure, was the sight of that green and gold escutcheon royally vermilioned with heraldic blazonry of slender bars and barrulets, composed of poppies, running through it. The flowers were like signal-flags, calling her attention. Near by were a few neglected fig-trees; and the place had the appearance of having been cultivated from olden time, for there were ancient landmarks which had never been moved. But there was no habitation nor human being in sight.

She found a small quantity of poor figs upon the trees, which she greedily devoured; and soon she was in the midst of the grain, plucking the ears of wheat, and winnowing them in her hands. When she had satisfied her hunger, she continued her work till she had well supplied her bag. The poppies grew thick around her, some with drooping heads, as if ashamed

— all blushing scarlet. Some looked up at her as if with speechless wonder, showing those great black and white maculations, set in the petals, like human eyes of pity and sweet, tearful sympathy.

She had placed the sleeping Talmai under a great clump of the poppies, which, in company with the long, tapering sprays of the purple gladiolus, kept salaaming and bending over him, as if in admiration of the beautiful boy, who looked like a young sun-god, his hair, at this age, being of a golden brown.

"He will sleep well under the poppies," she said, repeating an old saying of the people, attributing, not unjustly, a soporific influence to the flower.

He slept well, confirming the proverb, and did not awake until she was ready to proceed on her journey. She now was more thirsty than ever; her search among the rocks for a spring or pool of water had been fruitless; but her faith in the flight of the birds was as implicit as that of any Roman augur. Those messengers of Allah, though now coming from different quarters, still had one destination, she perceived.

"That is where there is water," she said, "surely, surely."

On the further side of the field she found, leading from it, a partly obliterated path, which she followed. This brought her to a depression or hollow, ending in a ravine, which in turn, passed into a narrow, deep and rocky glen.

There was a deserted savage air to the place which seemed at first repellent, and thrilled her with a sense of awe or dread. It had the appearance of having been, at some distant period, inhabited, though now not a single dwelling or structure remained intact, or recognisable even as a ruin. But as she descended into the gorge, she passed various fragments of stonework, which originally might have belonged to buildings of some kind. There seemed the hint of a catastrophe, a mysterious doom, in the surroundings. She now gave them little examination or thought, for her quick ear had caught that more than delightful sound — the silvery splash of falling water.

"I knew it! I knew it!" she exclaimed with a gladsome cry.

Rushing forward, she beheld the precious liquid which in her fevered imagination she had longed for and conjured up a hundred times during her weary tramp. Could she believe it? Did she see aright?

"It is a fountain," she said, with immeasurable joy.

The sparkling current fell from ledge to ledge, with intervening basins or pools in the rock, — to her a marvellous sight, — a gift of God. Flinging herself upon her knees beside the nearest pool with the eagerness of the famished, she stooped over and commenced dashing the water with her hand into her parched mouth.

"Praise be to the All-Merciful! Did I not know the birds would lead me aright?"

These were her continual ejaculations, as, after having quenched her thirst, she bathed herself with complete appreciation of the refreshing luxury in one of the deeper pools.

She had already washed and dressed the little Talmai, and now had more time to examine into the character of the place and its advantages as a point at which to sojourn.

Hilwe was not long in deciding to abide here for the present.

"Can it be Ain Farah?" she asked herself. "Kadra told me about it, but she did not tell me half of what I find. If it be Ain Farah, then am I not so far escaped as I imagined," reasoned Hilwe, "though still well northward of Jerusalem. I must have wandered aside overmuch. Yet it is out of the way of general resort, and for a little while to all appearance I may securely make my abode here where there is abundance of water."

She had discovered in the cliffs a series of caves which in former times, long passed, had apparently been fronted with dwellings of an unusually fine character. Higher up in the cliffs and more inaccessible were other caves which seemed to have been resorted to on occasions of extreme danger. Hilwe had selected one of the latter, and soon made it as comfortable as possible for her occupation.

She had come upon it by accident. At a point in the southerly cliff she had found several blocks of stones

piled on top of one another. This at once attracted her attention, for evidently it was the work of man, and there was a purpose in the step-like arrangement of the stones. On mounting to the top of the pile she could just reach a succession of roughly-cut steps or rather notches on the face of the cliff, by which she carefully climbed to a shelf-like ledge, above which the rock shot up, perfectly smooth and almost perpendicular to another and the highest ledge, giving not a single perceptible foothold between. But she discovered, hidden in a cleft in the rock, a rudely-made but strong ladder still in a fair state of preservation. This showed that some one within recent years had occupied the retreat. Two deep sockets or hollows in the rock near by were made to receive the foot of the ladder, the top of which when in position reached nearly to the upper ledge at a point where well-made grooves held it in place, preventing it from slipping.

Hilwe with but little difficulty ascended to the top by means of the ladder, which she drew up after her. Here was her inviolate cave, which may have been originally the abode of the troglodites of Palestine, or subsequently the refuge of the early Christian hermits who in the seventh century flocked to such retreats by thousands, and whose cells to this day honeycomb the rocky gorges throughout the country, as in the Cedron Valley, Mar Saba, and the Jordan. That there had been another and very different occupation of the place, pointing to a higher civilisation, was apparent from the fragments of sculpture and other remains strewn on every side.

To any of these inhabitants as well as afterward to the fellaheen, the presence of the water would have been an attraction of paramount importance.

And yet the place was deserted. This puzzled Hilwe, while she profited by it. Then she remembered Kadra's having told her that there was a curse upon Ain Farah, some disaster having befallen it, and that now it was rarely resorted to except at certain seasons, such as at sheep-shearing, when the shepherds drove their flocks to the waters for washing.

But though Hilwe thought of the possible proximity of the jinn, vampires, and other like undesirable beings,

the advantages connected with the place decided her to continue to remain there. She admitted there was a mysterious sense of isolation and gloom about it; but as day after day passed by without molestation or trouble, she settled gradually into a feeling of security and confidence which she had not dared to expect. True, she had to traverse quite a distance to obtain grain, fruits, and other supplies of food; but this very fact rendered more probable her immunity from intrusion, and the secret refuge of the sheltering cave and the nearness and abundance of the water were superlative benefits not easily outweighed.

Well might she think the place peculiar — haunted. It was so in a sense beyond her simple comprehension. It must have been an ancient river-bed, a passage for the floods of prehistoric times, cutting a way of escape for themselves. A swift-rushing river must have swept through this water-worn channel, with its polished bottom and gaping sides, — a deep, fleet, irresistible power, now reduced to these paltry dimensions, a trickling stream, with intermittent pools in the hollows, where sand, gravel, and pebbles collected. Great boulders lay deposited high up on rocky shelves where some unusual overflow had left them stranded and ever since undisturbed.

Hilwe wondered as she picked up pieces of tesseræ; single cubes were numerous, and occasionally several were seen grouped together in the original matrix, giving a faint conception of the mosaic pattern. They must have been part of the pavement of an extensive building of importance. Then the fragments of the carved pilasters, with their primitive Ionic capitals, — those Ammonic ram's-horn volutes, — they meant much. In those far-off palmy days, a palace or a temple may have stood upon the shore, with portico opening on the descent, and steps leading down to the flood. The cells, caverns, and deep recesses and the later precautions for retreat, revealed conditions of both remote and nearer times which also gave her food for thought. But in her lofty den, as she lowered and raised her ladder, she felt that sense of security which the warder of some ancient castle must have felt behind his drawbridge and portcullis.

CHAPTER XLIV

IT was one of those warm, cloudless, monotonously equable days so frequent in Palestine, unduly prolonging the rainless season, and Hilwe was returning to her secluded glen laden with the spoil of the fields. She swiftly went upon her way, bearing the burden and rejoicing in her heart.

In her excursions to the outside world and the fields to renew her supply of provisions, which latterly had become scanty and difficult of procuring, Hilwe continued to use the greatest precaution to prevent discovery and being tracked to her lair. Though the distance she was obliged to cover and the labour of finding and collecting the food gave her fatiguing work, the change from the oppressive atmosphere of the glen was an agreeable break or variation to her. If only successful she was satisfied to endure the toil.

Two or three times she had had narrow escapes from detection, which had warned her to be even more careful in her movements in future and to restrict her visits to the fields to occasions when absolutely necessary. Thus, to avoid risks, she often let her little store run low before renewing it, and this was the case on this bright warm day when she could no longer postpone her innocent raid.

She had already reached the descent into the hollow, and was congratulating herself that the ravine would soon receive and conceal her, when she heard the unmistakable clang and clash of rapidly-approaching horses, and, lifting her eyes, trembled to behold several mounted soldiers, who came up at a brisk gallop. As they drew nearer, she perceived they were zaptiehs, which only added to her horror.

She quickened her footsteps, sliding from shadow to shadow and rock to rock, underneath the banks, with that peculiar and inimitable grace of movement which was her heritage — the badge of her kinship with the

untaught and untamed creatures of the wilderness, whose every motion is in harmony with Nature.

She was greatly relieved when she reached the bottom of the glen — the bottom such as she knew it. For she had not penetrated farther, and had no knowledge that, beyond, the silvery waters, fed by many a tributary brook and streamlet, at last, by many a tortuous bend and saltatory plunge, found a channel for itself to the Ghor, and through a deep and narrow chasm fell foaming into the already muddy Jordan.

Yet the influence of a certain dread overshadowed her. She could not shake it off.

Having relieved herself of her burden, she seated herself on a broken slab of rock near the water, her favourite resting-place.

She had placed her child, carefully wrapped up, in the shelter of the adjoining cliff, that he might not be disturbed by her movements. He was her comfort and her terror, her sorrow and her joy, her hope and her despair. He was Hassan's child. That was her constant thought. The handsome young shepherd had stamped his image on him. She could not look at the boy without thinking of Hassan — without seeing him. It was as if she heard him always saying the words she ever kept repeating: "Now, Hilwe, take care of my child."

The responsibility of defending and protecting the boy was upon her. This was almost as strong as her love for him, — though nothing, hardly her love for Hassan himself, could be as strong as that. But it was another sort of love — entirely so. This she felt without reasoning about it. Certain it was she loved Hassan none the less, but all the more because of the child.

How strangely sorrowful and fearfully lonely was the wild, weird landscape which surrounded her. And over her the oppressiveness of that big, unbroken, monotonous sky — the eternal blue — brooding, weighed her down with its dreadful omens of unexpressed fatality, whatever it might be. A cloud would have been a relief, as something tangible, recognisable, definite.

Why did all this affect her as never before? The closely surrounding cliffs made it seem like a prison.

The stream of water, so rampant during the rainy season, was daily growing less under that burning, cloudless sky. The sources of the brook were failing, she feared. It would soon dwindle to a thread, and then dry up. The very flowers took on an inimical aspect.

From among the loose stones near by shot up, tall, stately, and impressive, the great purple-black arum, its long yellow spadix, in fine contrast, protruding prominently from its velvety sheath, sprinkled with golden dust, a very Lothario — a voluptuous lordling of flowers. Like Dives, the wicked rich man, clothed in purple, and faring sumptuously, it seemed to hold itself aloof, in its aristocratic exclusiveness, from contact of all beggarly flowers, while, with somewhat of a Mephistophelian attitude and mien, a more evil-looking plant, — one of the scrophularia — a tawny, crawling thing with big lips splotched with black, clung to a piece of old ruined wall, as if malevolently watching her. Nearer, the spiny hyssop reached down its sharp claws.

When Hilwe had consoled herself with the thought that she had escaped the observation of the zaptiehs, she had deceived herself. Yet she might have known better. The Oriental "has eyes in his pole," as they say. Nothing escapes him. His curiosity and suspicion and sweep of eye are unbounded, and they all act in concert with detective purpose. It seems impossible to do anything that he will not see. He even sees you coming before you come, and he beholds in imagination what he thinks you would do. The prophetic instinct possesses him. It is his by inheritance. The act *in prospectu* is revealed to him. When you least anticipate it, he is upon you.

It is wonderful to find at what distances he can see minute objects, and with what suddenness those deep unearthly eyes of his are unexpectedly turned upon the unconscious individual. As he stands talking to you he will have read every word of the letter you have been writing that lies upon your desk. Should the drawer of your bureau at the other end of the room be open, he will manage, in the most natural manner, to get to it before you are aware, and will know all its contents, almost at a glance.

This trait — this power of the eye and of spirit vision is seen in the frequent allusions in the Bible to eyes. "Thou, God, seest me," said Hagar. The eyes of the Lord are spoken of as being "in every place," and as "running to and fro"; the wheels of the living creatures, in Ezekiel, are described as being "full of eyes," and the beasts before the throne in Revelation as "full of eyes before and behind," and "full of eyes inside."

The zaptiehs were those of Kiamil Aga's squad, and Kiamil was with them. In no sense were they deficient in the direction referred to, — rather, their raids, characterised by marauding and ravaging, had quickened and sharpened their natural gifts. Their eyes were like hawks' eyes; they could see the prey from far; they could gaze into the sun, like the eagle.

They had seen Hilwe, and had noted her hurried escape into the ravine. When they came to the hollow they drew rein, and Kiamil called Assad to him.

"Ride on to the next village, and wait there for me," he said. "I shall be detained here a little while, but shall soon overtake thee."

He made some trifling excuse, the first that suggested itself to him; and Assad was not deceived.

"We can bide here for thee," the sergeant suggested.

"Nay, it is not necessary," replied Kiamil. "Ride on; and thou canst water the horses while waiting for me."

When the men had left, the aga turned without delay, and rode down the slope into the hollow. Reaching the steeper descent which ended in the ravine and chasm, and where the loose fragments of rocks and stones made perilous footing for the horseman, he dismounted, not disinclined to stretch his legs after his long gallop, and, passing the bridle over his arm, led the faithful mare the remainder of the way.

Had she been able to speak, how many a strange and evil adventure into which she had been dragged by her master could the sagacious creature have told of! But those Arab horses, it must be admitted, come very near to speaking.

The immunity from punishment, or even censure,

which hitherto had marked the career of Kiamil Aga had only encouraged him in the indulgence of more flagrant excesses. He flattered himself that his cleverness and adroitness would continue to extricate him from adverse consequences, as they had in the past; and he grew more careless, and plunged deeper and deeper into the Stygian mire.

Finding that the feet of the mare made altogether too sonorous and too loud a clatter among the multitudinous flakes and chips of rock that strewed the defile, which might prove dangerous to his purpose, as it seemed as though the very stones were crying out, he fastened her securely in a sheltered spot, determined to proceed alone, and cautiously reconnoitre, not knowing how many persons he might encounter in this remote spot. Notwithstanding his ardent temperament, the captain rarely dispensed with a certain amount of caution in his proceedings. Perhaps it might be said to be the point at which his conscience principally manifested itself.

At last he turned the corner of the jutting cliff, which gave a full view of the narrow cañon-like glen, with the stream running through, and Hilwe seated by the water.

As he saw and recognised her, his whole attitude changed. He drew nearer to her, slowly, as it appeared to him, but with an eagerness which was so intense, he felt an influence go out of him, precede him, and take possession of her in advance. He breathed deep. He trembled. His eyes, fixed upon her, dilated and brightened. He was transfigured.

"It is she, — the beautiful Hilwe. I knew her the moment I saw her," he said.

Hilwe had felt that indescribable sensation which we all, at one time or other, have experienced in some slight degree, — the impression of the presence or approach of another; but had put forth an effort to counteract it, and dismiss it, as unworthy of acceptance, — she had been so free from intrusion ever since her abode there. She even resisted the impulse to raise her eyes and look, with the superstition that this would bring what she dreaded.

So absorbed was she by her conflicting thoughts, she rather felt than noticed the young officer's approach. Nor did she perceive him till his shadow almost fell upon her, and he stood before her, in all the insinuating attractiveness for which he was noted.

He drew closer with great gentleness and courtesy. His manner was almost modest.

If anything, he was more fascinating than ever. He had gained in weight, which was an improvement to his figure. A more masculine fulness and a finer muscular development distinguished him; while a deeper bronze upon his cheek added the finishing touch to his most prepossessing exterior. His frequent exercise in the open air had brought this result. He was dressed with his usual care and pride. His shapely limbs, of which he was so vain, were luxuriously encased in rich and perfectly-fitting uniform, which revealed him to the best advantage. All this was apparent at a glance.

He saluted her with an accomplished grace, a blending of the military and the courtly that was almost reassuring; and, without thinking, she returned his salutation in her unaffected natural manner.

How smooth and refined were his motions, his words, and his actions!

He continued to speak kindly; and then, expressing his surprise at finding her in that wild and lonely place, offered to conduct her to her home or to some safe abode.

At this she only shook her head.

Finally he protested his love for her: —

"Ever since I first saw thee, thou hast been in my mind," he said. "I love thee with my whole soul. Wilt thou not have compassion on me, and return my devotion?"

He spoke with such vehemence, such animated fervour and earnestness, his words had that genuine ring of feeling which goes far with woman.

"Wilt thou not speak?" he continued. "Can I not move thee? Why dost thou harden thy heart against me?"

She was greatly alarmed. She had not attempted to reply, but remained silent, through embarrassment and fear.

Looking around, in the direction of where she had left her child, she suddenly sprang to her feet, and made a determined effort to escape.

"Ah, no, no! thou must not fly. Thou wouldst not treat me so badly," he said, catching her in his arms. "Have I not told thee that I love thee? I would do thee no harm, believe me."

"Let me go, I beseech of thee!" she pleaded. "How canst thou behave so treacherously?"

She struggled to free herself; but he held her all the more tightly.

"Nay; I have thee now," he said exultantly, a triumphant smile parting his lips and lighting up his face. "I will not let thee go. Thou canst not escape me. It is useless for thee to struggle."

The only excuse he had, if excuse there can be, was that he passionately loved her.

"Hast thou no pity? Act not so foolishly. Knowest thou not I am another's?"

"Ah, I count that as naught! Thy lover hath forsaken thee, and gone into a far country. Hath he not been false to thee? Hath he not taken to him other wives, of the strange women of the land? The Greek women are fair to look upon, and wily. They have golden hair like the sunbeams and eyes blue as the heavens, — such as men like Hassan love. And, since, hath he not been slain in battle? Yea, thou mayst believe it. Is it not so reported to us? Thou shalt never see his face again."

Hilwe shrieked with horror and grief as she heard the fatal words.

"Nor is it as though thou hadst been his widow," he continued. "Why shouldst thou mourn for him? And how couldst thou, in any case, prefer such an one to me, his master, — who am better every way, — I who love thee so, — I who am here present with thee? What is a dead man to me?"

"Release me, if thou hast any kindness or love

for me, as thou sayest thou hast," she besought of him.

"Ah, that is why I cannot!"

He pressed his face against hers as he spoke.

She cried aloud and screamed, as she tried to deliver herself from him.

In the uninhabited, empty place her cries were lost. The air seemed to dissipate them, or drink them up. There was none to hear them, or to help her, as he plainly told her.

Her struggles were fast exhausting her.

"Canst thou not return my love, or show me a little kindness?" he asked, as he commenced to kiss her.

In a moment, with an effort that was as sublime in its purity, grace and strength as it was unexpected of the captain of zaptiehs, she thrust him from her. Taken unawares, he staggered backward; and she, bounding across the rocks, reached the spot where her child lay sleeping.

Snatching the boy from the ground, she slung him over her shoulders, and then turned to make her way to where the pile of stones gave access to the steps or notches cut in the rock leading to the lower shelf of the cliff.

But the aga, quickly recovering himself, had followed her, and was already between her and the place of ascent.

Without a second's hesitation, she began climbing the cliff where she stood.

To attempt this would have seemed folly to her at any other time, but now it was her only hope of escape; as she well knew that, upon the ground, encumbered with her child, the aga could easily outrun and capture her.

He was too full of his purpose, — too thoroughly driven of his passion to give way very easily. Headlong he went, determined to gain his end, regardless of risks or consequences. The obstacles he had met with, and his former thwarting, only incited him the more fiercely to conquer now. It was now or never with him.

The climbing an apparently inaccessible height to escape her pursuer, her little child fastened on her back, — his weight dragging about her neck, — the horror of it all, who can describe it? Clinging with the last remnant of her strength to the scant mould and the stunted vegetation growing out of it, and the rock they at wide intervals partially covered, almost despairing of escape, the beads of moisture, like the damp of death, gathering on her brow, her spent fingers slipping from their hold, her heart failing her, — it was like some fearful nightmare, the terror that overwhelms in a dream of darkness, rather than reality. Yet is the great terror very real to such as find themselves within its shadowy power.

The captain had rushed in pursuit of Hilwe up the steep ascent, and, in his fierce excitement, paused not at the cliff, but began at once climbing after her.

His heavy cavalry boots were, however, an encumbrance to him, and he had more than one severe slip from his insecure foothold.

Hilwe, with her naked feet and her life-long experience in clambering up the rocky acclivities of the hill-country, had decidedly the advantage of him in this respect. But she was weighted and handicapped with her child. Besides, the higher she went the more difficult became the ascent, the rock presenting scarce a vantage-point for the hand to grasp, or the foot to rest upon. The smoothness and steepness of the upper part of the cliff were the obstacles he counted on to arrest her progress, and deliver her into his power.

Agile and capable as was the aga, his impetuosity on this occasion was an impediment to him. He felt so sure of accomplishing his purpose, he was not as careful in the means to that end as he should have been. Flushed, ablaze and radiant with his anticipated triumph, on the verge of victory as he thought himself, a mis-step brought him to grief. He failed in his footing, slipped in a violent effort to recover himself, and completely lost his hold. He fell to the bottom of the cliff, as lead sinks in water.

The dull, heavy thud told the story. Though the

height from which he fell was not great, his late accession of avoirdupois had not helped to meliorate the force of the concussion. He had received a serious shock and was considerably hurt. But to be mortified, degraded in the presence of a woman, to fail where she was succeeding, — that was worst of all, that was unendurable to the vanity of the pretentious young officer.

His fine feathers had been ruffled, his elegant raiment soiled and discomposed, his handsome limbs bruised; but he would not let her perceive any of this, or a particle of what he suffered.

He rushed upon his object, like one insensate, and again attacked the cliff. He climbed with fiercer energy, the frenzied passion in him setting him on fire.

"Think not thou shalt escape me. I shall have thee yet," he shouted, as he approached her.

He was growing savage.

His square and solid shoulders heaved; his eyes blazed; his stalwart legs braced themselves confidently; he breathed hard and deep through his dilated nostrils, as he steadied himself and pressed close to the ribbed, unfeeling precipice, as though it were something to love. He felt no more the bruises that were upon his body. A proud joy warmed his heart. His life leaped ungovernable within him, while he tried to be discreet.

"Ah, I shall take care and be sure, this time!" he muttered between his full-drawn breathings. "My good fortune will not forsake me now. I shall be successful."

Her case was desperate. He certainly was close upon her. She dared not look down. She had reached the smooth part of the rocky wall, where the beetling crag overhung so forbiddingly; and finding the hopelessness of further effort in that direction, had gradually worked to the left, with the intent to reach, if possible, the shallow extremity of the upper ledge, and so gain her cave of refuge.

"If I were only there," she said, "I could defend myself against attack, and afterwards escape."

No wonder that her head became dizzy! No wonder that her heart failed her! But still she clung to the rock and the crumbling soil almost parting from the rock, and heroically struggled to evade him.

Love, hope, fear — hope that lost itself in fear, and became distracted and bewildered, and despairing, till it could no longer be recognised as hope — urged her with a blind instinct, even when her mind trembled, and she scarce knew what she did.

Oh, the agonised clutching! Were her tired and numb fingers slipping? — her strength becoming exhausted? Had she let go? Was she falling downward, — downward, with inevitable destruction beneath? Her head grew confused, and she believed this, till she felt herself sink through the parting air, expecting every instant that her child and herself would be dashed in pieces on the jagged rocks below.

Was she still clinging to the brittle soil, — the scanty herbage, — the wrinkled rock?

She was nearing the end of her strength. All would soon be over. She could endure no more.

"O Allah, help!"

The words escaped in a wail from her parched throat. The shallow fissile mould parted and broke away completely. Her fingers still clutched a handful of it as with a death grasp, and with closed eyes she sank, she fell. She was lost. She knew no more. . . .

She knew no more. But it was only for a little while. She expected to be dashed in pieces with her child. As she sank through the air she grew faint, and resigned herself to the inevitable.

How much may be included in a second of time!

She had done what she could. She was sacrificing her life for her honour and her child. All was over. Now the action had passed from her into the greater power, — the Supreme, — as men speak and reason. Yet is it not in this we ever live and move and have our being? Is not all Nature a manifestation of that power?

In the midst of that deathly descent she felt herself suddenly seized, as in the grasp of a mighty hand. She was stayed, — uplifted, — supported. It was like a

miracle. As she timidly opened her eyes she at once perceived her deliverance. A sharp, projecting spur of the rock, not far below the level of the first ledge or shelf of the cliff, had in that fearful plunge caught her raiment and held her from destruction.

Her first impulse was to see that her child was safe and uninjured. There was a startled look in his eyes; but, not knowing what the trouble meant, the brave boy was not greatly frightened, and did not cry, being soon reassured by her consoling words.

She was in such a position that with care she could easily reach the ledge, while through the smooth surface of the intervening rock she was out of immediate danger from the aga.

Freeing her dress, she gradually worked her way to the point of escape indicated.

But the aga, instantly anticipating her intention and knowing he could not reach her from his present position, commenced to descend the face of the cliff, a movement deftly and rapidly accomplished by him.

"She is giving me much trouble, but I shall have her in the end," he said.

Having gained the ledge, Hilwe soon ran along it, to the recess in which she at first had found the ladder, and where for security she always hid it when leaving, that it might not attract attention to her retreat.

Meanwhile, the captain's quick glance had discerned the piled stones and the steps leading to the ledge, which he was not slow in using. By the time Hilwe had fitted the ladder in place and was half-way up it, Kiamil was at its foot. How quick were his strides to reach it! How eagerly he stepped up the rounds of the rudely-constructed thing, that bent and swayed beneath his weight!

"I have tracked thee to thy den," he said. "After all, I have conquered. There is no escape for thee now."

A look of immeasurable satisfaction lighted his face.

She had barely reached the top of the ladder and the upper ledge where was her cave when the determined young officer had covered nearly two-thirds of the way in pursuit.

Hilwe had seen him coming, and had hoped to have gained the top and drawn up the ladder before he had put his foot upon it; but he had been too quick for that. Now an awful extremity, utterly unanticipated, faced her.

She called to him, warning him not to follow. But she only heard his mocking laugh in reply.

"Desist!" she cried; "come no farther, or thy life is in danger!"

She shook the ladder threateningly, and partly lifted the upper end from the notches in which it rested.

"Ah, thou wouldst not harden thy heart against me! Thou wouldst not treat me so cruelly, and only because I love thee!"

As he spoke, he looked up smiling in her face. How confident he was! He enjoyed the position, and did not think she would carry out her threat.

One of the rounds had given way and snapped beneath him, which had delayed him.

"Believe me — believe what I tell thee," she said. "If thou comest one step farther, I shall fling the ladder backward. Thy life is in peril."

"Thou knowest I shall have thee. I am determined to make thee love me," was his warm and easy answer. "Nay, I believe that at heart thou lovest me."

Again he laughed, — that self-indulgent laugh.

"Wilt thou not go back ere it is too late?"

"Ah, no, no! Thou wouldst not hurt me."

There was a tone of defiance as well as of cajolery in his voice, and he continued to ascend. He was now very near the top.

"Then thy blood be upon thine own head," she said. "Thou hast driven me to extremity. God help me! I have naught else left to do."

Her face was ashy pale. The lines of her features grew rigid with pain.

She pushed out the head of the ladder with what she thought all her might. He was so near the top it required more exertion to move it than she had supposed necessary. He had counted on this, and tried to seize her as she bent from above.

Then she put forth additional strength, fearing it was not enough.

Out, out went the ladder, — farther, — farther, — still farther.

The expression of mingled horror and rage that gathered in his eyes had not yet blotted out the smile that lingered on his lips. A cry for mercy was strangled in his throat. He clung to the ladder in a frenzy of despair, but spoke not a word.

For an instant that senseless thing of wood stood erect, wavering, as if animate, and undecided which way it would elect to fall. Then it toppled over, and plunged with a crash into the gorge.

The captain of zaptiehs lay broken, maimed, and senseless at the foot of the cliff.

A groan of utter misery burst from Hilwe's lips as she covered her face with her hands and sank backward upon the narrow ledge.

That day had been to her as a hired assassin who comes to a man with smiling face, and asks, "Is it well with thee, my brother?" and stabs him under the fifth rib.

CHAPTER XLV

AS Hilwe, gaining sufficient courage, looked down from the rocky ledge of her safety, and saw the aga, far below, in that most bitter extremity, an unspeakable horror possessed her.

The strength which had carried her through her dire ordeal was expended. She was weak as water.

She wondered at what she had done. She could scarcely believe it. It seemed the act of another.

Had she murdered a man? Had she taken life — even to preserve her honour?

His half-strangled cry for mercy was ringing in her ears. The stain of blood was upon her.

It was impossible but that a feeling of pity and remorse mingled with the rush, the torrent of grief, clamour and reproach which inundated her soul.

There he lay, crushed and dying, that proud handsome young man, late so full of life and energy. His crime had been love for her — sinful love, it is true. But how terrible had been his punishment! Was it not expiatory? Is not all sin — of every kind and shape — sin of far deeper dye than his, capable of expurgation, amenable to sacrificial atonement? Is it not a dogma of human nature and of all religions — the Egyptian, Pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan?

True, in his case there had been no repentance, nor place for regret. In his condemnation and punishment, in which she was judge and executioner, there was no room for his choice or interference, or, at least, not such as he accepted. But retributive justice had been so swift, so sure, so thorough and so terrible, it carried with it a certain commiseration for the guilty.

When the end had been reached, and all was over, and she was saved, the woman's heart melted — relented. She felt sorry for him. She would have gone down, and ministered to him, and done what she could to ease his last moments, bringing him water to cool his fevered state; but she dared not. Something warned her not to venture, — to beware — beware! He was not to be trusted. Might it not be that his predominant passion would gather force at the close? It was even possible his condition was not as serious as it seemed to be.

"No, I dare not go down, or near him. As it is, I have delayed too long already. Some of his companions may come here seeking him, and find me and my child."

The thought was sufficient to add another and the final spur to her fears.

She fled, as one demented, from the narrow gorge in which she had for so many days dwelt securely and unmolested.

Pursued by the phantom image of the dead or dying aga, she saw him, prostrate, either still and cold, or in the mortal agony, writhing in torture, drawing up his limbs to him in the sharpness of death — the pang and the spasm that let out the life. For she was sure that if he was not dead, he could not long survive.

How grand, how awful he looked, lifted up on that scaffold-like ladder, facing her, before he went down; casting that glance of silent reproach at her, for what seemed an eternity! She saw the lingering smile of assurance on his lips pass into horror and rage. She could not bear it. She fled and knew not whither. To escape — to get away from this terror and the place that held it was her one intolerant desire.

But could she escape it? Could she get away from it?

It went with her. It ever remained with her, as she soon found.

"I have slain a man in his prime, in the fulness of his hope. I have laid low a strong man, in the flush of his promise."

These were the thoughts and the words which continually haunted her, and made themselves felt, even through the overwhelming agony of grief that had fallen upon her when the aga had told her of Hassan's death and false-heartedness.

Through desolate places that she knew not, and where the very sky looked down on her with hard unfriendly eye that would not pity but condemned, she wandered on — on, lost, despised, forsaken.

As she looked back, when she dared to look back, it seemed as if she had always been grieving and wandering. As if there was never a time in which she had not been a fugitive. As if the very ground she trod on hated and loathed her, and, casting her forth, would have none of her, and urged her onward.

"Away with thee!" it cried. "Away from me, murderess! What have I to do with such as thou art?"

And the night was no blacker than the day, for it was all night with her. And the day brought no light, for the darkness of her soul shut it out from her.

CHAPTER XLVI

WHEN hour after hour passed by, and there was no appearance of the aga, his men began to be uneasy at his delay; and more than once Assad went up on the look-out point of the village, where they awaited him, to reconnoitre, and try if he could not catch a glimpse of his errant captain.

At first they had joked about it, and indulged in many questionable pleasantries at the aga's expense, after their manner.

"The aga is enjoying himself. He is having a fine time," was Assad's conjecture, well founded, as he supposed, from former experiences.

They had watered the horses, and, as it grew later, had fed them out of the peasants' store of provender. They, too, had their own inclinations to gratify, and while they waited did not fail to amuse themselves in such ways as the place afforded. They smoked, they told stories, played at dice, draughts, or other games of chance, drank coffee, and when they grew hungry, ate of the refreshments which were liberally provided for them. To gain the goodwill of the zaptiehs, and with the hope of escaping plunder and worse treatment, the fellaheen will give of their best to these terrors of the Sultan. But fear, not love, is the governing motive.

Assad at length awoke to the conviction that something serious must have occurred to detain the aga, and taking one of the men with him, set out to retrace the way to where they had left Kiamil.

They carefully watched for any indications which would show that, unknown to them, he had returned, but finding none, rode down, through the hollow, into the ravine.

Here the loud whinnying of the gray mare attracted their attention to her. This was the first evidence they had found of the aga's presence.

The mare was fastened just as her master had left her; and from appearances had long been a prisoner. It

gave the devoted Assad a shock, fearing some accident had happened to his chief, between whom and himself more than an ordinary attachment existed.

"Surely evil hath befallen him, or he would not delay his coming," he murmured.

He owed much to the aga, who from the first had taken a liking to him and favoured him; and it was through this favouritism Assad had obtained his appointment in the zaptiehs, and finally his promotion to the rank of sergeant.

He was the aga's bosom companion, his familiar, the promoter, and to a large extent the sharer, of his pleasures and escapades.

If his superior had escaped the odium of being notoriously reckless and dissolute, it was to be attributed largely to Assad's management, and the secretiveness and deceit habitual to a people whose simplest acts have an atmosphere of stealth and cunning about them.

It is their nature. They can no more help it than can the tiger or anaconda. The Oriental loves mystery even where there is no use for it; he loves it for itself alone. He enters into an intrigue with gusto. He battens on chicanery. Therefore is it that evil construction is placed by him on the most innocent procedure of the European and the stranger that is within his gates. He attributes to the sojourner of England or America the proclivities, designs and actions that he himself would be guilty of under like opportunities.

After all, considering what the world is, this may not be thought so very extraordinary.

Too much of all this looseness had pertained to the history of Kiamil and Assad not to have had its effect. Each had entered so far into the life of the other as to be generally requisite to what had become the happiness of both.

It was with no little concern that Assad, searching for his captain on every side, descended deeper and deeper into the ravine, that now seemed to him the Valley of the Shadow of Azrael. At length he caught a glimpse of the water, as it fell with a melancholy

sound, and near it saw a confused patch of dark blue, relieved against the reddish yellow of the stones.

This last, as he drew nearer, took the shape of a man. It was the crushed form of the aga. He saw this at a glance, and hurried forward with the worst forebodings.

"The aga is dead!" he exclaimed to his companion. "Did I not say evil had befallen him?"

"It may not be so bad," was the reply. "Perhaps he is asleep or resting."

"Ah no! He would not look like that!" cried Assad passionately. "Nor would he be resting at this time."

A fall so desperate as that sustained by the captain could only be expected to result in the most serious consequences. As he approached the ground in that awful plunge, the shattered ladder turned and rebounded beneath him, breaking his fall, and, in some slight degree, saved his tossed and dishonoured body from the worst effects of his disaster. It seemed to sympathise with him, and to have mercy upon him.

He lay motionless at the foot of the cliff, stunned and bruised and broken. He had been knocked senseless, but he was not dead.

Presently his eyelids half unclosed; and, becoming conscious of the pain that was racking him, he slowly drew up one leg, then stretched it out to its full length, in agony. His other leg lay unmoved, as though benumbed. It was fractured at the thigh. He made an effort to rise or sit up, but fell back, helpless, moaning and gasping for breath.

He opened his eyes gradually, as if wearied. He looked around him. At once he remembered everything. Again he tried to spring to his feet, a flash of rage and hate flaming from his eyes. But he sank into the collapsed heap from which all his passion could not raise him.

He was furious, demoniac. He cursed, he swore, he vowed vengeance, and threatened murder.

To think that a woman should have outwitted him, have overwhelmed and conquered him — nay, might end in having killed him — ah, that was the bitterness and cruel humiliation of it! How he hated her, when he

thought of it! At the moment of victory, at the very summit of his hopes, to be cast down and destroyed! His ungovernable passion raged within him and tore him. He foamed at the mouth, and gnashed his teeth, while he hurled his profanity. It was horrible, — all the more so because it was with great difficulty and distress he drew his breath, and he did not know but that each breath might be his last.

But there was none besides himself to hear. Hilwe, the innocent occasion of his wrath, was far beyond his reach, every moment sending her farther on her way, escaped in flight from the scene of her heroic conflict.

Ever, from olden time, had it been held in that land a peculiar disgrace for a man to be slain or discomfited by a woman. In the days of the Judges, it is told of Abimelech, in his wild warfare, how he encamped against Thebez and took it. And how, when he came to the strong tower within the city, "and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire . . . a certain woman cast a piece of millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died."

This was the feeling that stirred the soul of Kiamil Aga. Never had a man felt more keenly the disgrace which had overtaken him. The ignominy of it had entered into his soul.

He cast his eyes down upon his battered frame, the body he had taken so much pride in, and he groaned and shuddered.

"I am less than a man. I am no man. I shall be left here to expire, — to die by the hand of a woman. There is no help for me. Why is not Assad here? Assad who professed such love for me, and for whom I did so much — why doth he not seek me? Alas! I told him not to come; I ordered him to await my coming. And now, when they find me I shall be numbered with the dead."

So spake the aga, in his weak and crushed state.

Lying exposed to the sun, a burning thirst assailed him. It was the more unbearable because, before his eyes, the limpid water, though in greatly reduced volume, streamed over the rocks, and fell into the pleasant verdure-encircled pools, as it passed on its way to the Ghor, where it emptied itself into the greater stream through that deep-cut fissure, a shallow, marshy stretch of land at its mouth reddened as by a wine-stain with the pink blossoms of multitudes of oleanders.

"Oh, the waste of it!" he cried; "and I cannot get one drop to cool my parched tongue."

He heard the tinkling treble of the water as it spilled itself from ledge to ledge, in a thin wavering column, and he could bear his craving for it no longer.

"I shall make another effort to get to it," he said. "I might as well die that way as to lie and slowly perish in agony."

He gathered his strength for the exertion, and dragged himself a little way on his face and hands. It was but a little way. Exhausted, he slipped and lost his balance, and, with a cry of excruciating pain, he found himself rolling down the slope, every movement being one of torture.

"Surely this will finish me," he thought. "It will knock the miserable remnant of my life out of me."

The shock, no doubt, was a severe one to a man in his state; but as he reached the level, and lay very still and deathlike for awhile, drawing every breath with increased distress, he heard a soft rippling sound close by him. He had rolled so near the shrunken stream he could dip his hand into it.

Feeble as he was, as soon as he perceived the water, he did not delay to moisten his lips and to drink. It was like new life to him; yet, so weak was he, that, to his great shame, the effort overcame him, and he sank back wearied and motionless.

At this moment it was that Assad saw him, and, thinking he was dead, with sad heart hastened to his side.

Great was the relief of the sergeant to find himself

mistaken, and that the breath of life was still within the prostrate man.

With the aid of his companion, the sergeant, having done everything in his power for the injured aga, brought him, with as kindly care as possible, to the village, where he was made comfortable in the best house — though poor was the best.

A surgeon had been immediately summoned from Jerusalem, and nothing was left undone to contribute to the recovery of the most unfortunate of zaptiehs.

In addition to his other injuries, he was pronounced injured internally. But he was young and strong, and soon was progressing favourably.

Throughout he had maintained an absolute silence as to the cause of his accident, from which nothing could move him. The most pressing inquiry had been able only to draw from him the statement that, in climbing the cliffs he had lost his footing and fallen.

He had not ceased, from the day he was deposited within it, to the day he left it, to complain of the poor accommodations of the village house. His gay, sybarite life had but ill prepared him for the enduring of an abode barren of the most ordinary comforts of civilisation.

As soon as it could safely be done, he was removed to one of the hospitals in Jerusalem, where he completed his convalescence, and where, in the semi-religious atmosphere of his surroundings, he had presented him a good opportunity for repentance, had he been so disposed. But the aga was not of that kind.

The decided limp which for many a day afterward, to his sore mortification, marked the gait of the vain captain, was but an outward indication of his inward and spiritual condition.

It was not easy for him to turn from the courses which to him were paths of pleasantness. For all the judgments that had befallen him, he repented not. He mended not his ways. Indeed, he rather felt as if the Supreme Power owed him a balance, duly credited to him in the Book of Life, for his enforced abstinence

during his illness; and he flung out into extra and new indulgences with the intention of making up for lost time, and exhausting his credit on the Great Register.

CHAPTER XLVII

HILWE was as one who is lost to herself.

She was bewildered with the horror which encompassed her.

She was as the spoil which the remorseless pale warrior gathereth after the battle, — then casteth from him as worthless.

She had become as a speck upon the horizon's verge.

By day and by night she had fled, nor knew she if they were many or few days that had cast her trembling shadow upon the parched ground, where there was no familiar thing, or that which is comforting or beautiful to detain her, or bid her rest.

Wandering — wandering, to be always wandering! Oh, the dread of it! As she looked about her she saw all the surrounding objects were moving with her — the whole world was wandering! Nothing was steadfast.

Her life was weary for the heaviness of the thought and the woe that oppressed her; and ever she said: —

"I have slain a man! I have wounded to death and laid low a strong man! He was fair and glad, and full of warmth and love. The cup of joy was at his lips. He imagined not the evil that was coming upon him. His life was in my hand to kill or to spare; and I overthrew him. I parted spirit and flesh. I drove out the soul from him. He has died in his lust. He has perished in his sin. His life and his love and that which was pleasant to him are passed and gone. He will know them no more — forever. Ah, woe is me! Did I not make myself as the vengeance of God, that is irresponsible — that cannot be questioned? I, who am but a weak erring woman, I who am but a poor fragment — a shard of a broken and

rejected vessel — how should I be as the Great All? How should I seize the judgment of vindication to myself, to exercise punishment and wrath upon him whom I adjudged guilty? Have I not sinned in this?"

And it came to pass as another day broke upon her, and she took no note of it, for day and night continued as one to her, a sunless, moonless darkness, her feet began to give way beneath her and the living burden she bore — the beautiful famishing child she carried upon her back, innocently smiling in the face of death.

When she had gone a long way, nor thought about it — whether it was far or otherwise — so lost was she — when so numbed she scarcely felt the gnawings of hunger, and knew not whether hours or days had passed since her dread experience, she saw before her, in a stripped field, an inclosure denuded of its harvest, what seemed a deserted booth of withered boughs.

It was a lodge left in what had been a garden of cucumbers and melons. For many a day had it been forsaken of the watchers who during the season had guarded the crop. It was desolate enough; but the grief and misery in her heart, looking through her eyes, painted it in still more sombre and dreary colours.

"Yet is it not a refuge?" she said, wearily, feebly.

With the feeling that she was dying, the maternal instinct to save her child, if possible, rose strong in her, paramount to everything else; and she put forth the last efforts of her failing strength to reach what seemed a shelter — poor as it might be.

It was too late. She had scarce crossed half the length of the field, when she fell, exhausted.

All her anxiety hitherto had centred on her child to save him; but now that was departing from her. She was too weak to make more than two or three ineffectual efforts to regain her feet. With all her attempts she had been able to stagger forward only a few steps. Each time she had again fallen.

A nameless consciousness of desolation, sadness, abandonment, misery — that was what she was becoming. She was ceasing from herself, and merging into a state devoid of all that makes life desirable.

Was it death? Was that rustling the footsteps of Azrael?

She no longer noticed, as such, the objects that had at first almost appalled her — the dreary aspect of her surroundings. The wilted, dead and dried vines that trailed over the ground of that despoiled garden, the shrivelled remains of broken gourds and stalks of melons and other seared and withered plants whose fruits had been gathered in, left upon her only a vague sense of dejection and loss of that which was gone, and could never be recalled.

"Am I not like unto them?" she felt rather than said.

When, aweary of it, she closed her eyes, she could not shut out the pain of it, for it was within her.

Near where she lay, a black beetle, the sacred scarabæus of the Egyptians, the species which they worshipped, and inscribed images of which they wore upon their persons and placed with their dead, was rolling, with all its energy, the pellet coated with clay containing its eggs. Emblem of the god Chepera, or "Becomer" — one who not only is the source of all life and fertility, and has created all things, but who has produced himself, and given birth to all the gods — great was its honour and worship. It toiled with head down, and, pushing with its hind legs the precious sphere — a miniature world — the sun — rolled it backwards towards the hole it had dug for its reception. It was its last act before it should die. The mystic creature, apocalyptic symbol, how much it meant to that augustly religious venerable people, who, in the days that have grown hoary, dwelt by the Nile, and built their stupendous temples of worship to everything, apotheosising from the whole range of creation. As the sagacious insect rolled that perfect globe, utterly unconscious of the divine honours which had been paid it, and of the emblematic interpretation of its simple life, and only intent on the perpetuation of its kind, did it not suggest the thought of the parallel or similitude between it and this poor mother in her extremity?

Having fallen the last time, Hilwe dragged herself

upon the ground, for a few feet farther, towards the dilapidated lodge, and could no more.

The child began to cry. It was an unwonted sound in that place.

Hilwe tried to soothe Talmai. But her throat was parched, she could not form the words of comfort, and the hoarse unnatural voice only made the boy cry louder.

"Be still. Am I not with thee?" she struggled to say.

There was a distinct rustling of the withered leaves of the booth — of more decided, crisper accent than that caused by the shifting of the breeze — and an apparition, in the form of a man of, indeed, uncommon aspect, stood before her.

Even in a land whose peasantry are so exempt from elaborateness of dress as in Palestine, and where it might be thought they have reduced raiment to the simplest quantity, the figure presented to her could hardly have escaped remark and surprise. On opening languidly her eyes, which for a moment she had closed, the apparition was almost beside her, seeming to have materialised from the surrounding air. She saw not the man's approach. And well might she imagine, as she did, that she had passed into the abode of spirits, and that this was one of its inhabitants.

It was not alone the vesture of the man that made him so peculiar, but his manner and general appearance.

He might be taken to be from between thirty-five to forty years of age, but doubtless looked older than he really was. Of middle height, slender build, and spare habit, his whole bearing had a singular self-possession and gentle dignity about it which were at once apparent. His thin face was ashy-pale, and his sympathetic blue eyes had a leaden hue; his light-brown hair hung long, reaching towards his shoulders, being as untrimmed as his pointed beard, which was of a like colour. The entire effect was suggestive, as doubtless it was intended to be, of the traditional appearance of the Nazarene. He had no shoes upon his feet, no covering on his head. The single garment he wore, if garment it could be

called, seemed rather a scanty drapery of white cotton than a piece of made-up apparel.

Strangest of all, this man was not an Oriental. He was an American.

It may well be considered remarkable that a people so eminently rational, and abounding in common-sense, — plain, practical, utilitarian, — so restive under anything approaching sentimentality, the useless, or effete, and so critical of all others indulging in the inconsistent, eccentric, or unreasonable, should give birth to so many of that multiform genus of unstable mind known as "crank." And the American "crank," especially when of the religious species, is generally of the most exaggerated type.

Yet it would be quite erroneous to suppose that this peculiar field of religious enterprise in Palestine is occupied only by subjects from America. The English come in a fair second, and the German and other nationalities follow in goodly numbers. The attraction is great, and effectively draws them.

But who is this American? And how comes he to be here, and in this shape?

George Pelerin Crosslett, this mild-eyed recluse, was a New-Englander, a descendant of one of the old colonial families. He was thus not only an American of several generations, but a genuine Yankee.

The Crossletts had originally come from England, where they had belonged to that greatly-to-be-respected order, the landed gentry. They had their pedigree, which traditionally traced them back to an ancestor who had accompanied King Richard I. to Palestine, in the Crusades. Their coat of arms was assigned to this origin. The shield might be described as *argent*, three cross-crosslets, *gules*, — having a silver field, charged with three red cross-crosslets, — a cross-crosslet being, as those versed in heraldry know, a cross having the three upper ends terminating in three little crosses. The arms therefore had a reference to the name, as well as some slight resemblance to those of Jerusalem. The crest, two palm-branches encircling an escallop-shell, the pilgrim's badge, further pointed to crusader days, of

which the motto "*Per crucem ad coronam*" was held to be additional confirmation. His second baptismal name, Pelerin, was that of his mother's family, which also claimed crusader descent, on more than one ground. *Pèlerin* is certainly the French for pilgrim; and one must not be too inquisitive in such matters, but must accept with a good grace all the rest of the evidence, even though it were trivial, and fabulously traditional.

In his happier days George Pelerin Crosslett was a pleasant lighthearted young fellow with the usual amount of animal spirits that fall to the share of budding manhood.

Years passed by, bringing him varied experiences, perhaps not always holy. Then came an unfortunate love-affair. It left him an altered man. He became moody, dreamy and brooding.

He could not shake off his despondency. To him, the loss of the woman he loved was an irreparable fatality. Finally his grief assumed a religious shape.

His family and friends had many an ill-advised joke to gibe him with, by way of cheer, — to rally him; and many an old musty proverb-store was ransacked and levied on for his benefit. "There are more fish in the sea than ever were caught," and such like, were made to do duty repeatedly, with maddening effect. He bore it like a martyr and a man.

But the expected rallying failed to appear. He gradually became more pronounced in his beliefs, and seemed to settle into a melancholic state, which began, at length, to alarm his friends. They feared insanity and suicide. The warm natural forces in him, which should have gone forth in affection and love, found no fruitage, nor even blossoming, but were checked, stunted and blighted.

He began to see visions, and hear voices. Strange and heretical religious views troubled him. Temptations in various seductive guises assailed him.

As to these last, he considered them evidences of saintship, and of Satan's desire to have him.

"Remember St. Anthony and St. Augustine," he would say, "and how they were tempted."

He had been brought up in the doctrines and communion of the American Episcopal Church — the fair and devoted daughter of the grand old Anglican faith — and this should have had its usual restraining and salutary power to aid and deliver. But he had allowed himself, almost imperceptibly, to lapse away in belief and practice, till he scarcely knew where he stood, driven about by every wind of doctrine. He was like a shipwrecked man.

Strangely superstitious notions, which fed on the most trifling and inconsistent details, took possession of him.

He dwelt on the significance of his name, the symbols of the coat of arms, and the traditions of the family relating to the Holy Land and the Crusades.

"Am I not a crosslet — a little cross?" he would say, stretching out his arms. "Let me crucify upon it the sinful affections."

He had manifestations, — esoteric signs and wonders of deeper significance; and the voices, interior, soft and low, fitted for his ear alone, finally took on a definite and positive purpose and aim.

"Go up to Palestine and to the Holy City," they said. "There is work for thee to do there; and thou shalt be at hand for the consummation of all things."

Here was something tangible, on which he could settle his disturbed and restless mind.

"Why should I not be a Crusader, as was more than one of my ancestors? Is not the secret mark upon me? Am I not called to the work — to be a soldier of the Cross?"

There was a candid childlike simplicity of faith in the way he talked of these things. Alone in the forest and fields, communing, in preparation for the work, he seemed to have acquired the language of the solitary places, the murmuring of Nature's voices in haunts apart from man. There was a sweet yet mournful solemnity in his tones as he spoke:

"Everywhere I looked I saw it," he said. "Not only in myself, or on church spires, or surmounting the gables

of religious houses, — but in the forest, where, on all sides, the branches crossed in every form of perspective, I saw the holy sign, the symbol of salvation. In the vaulted firmament I beheld the stars make it, as they had done for ages. Even in the meadows, with their sunshine and their blossoms, when the winds of heaven blew over them, like the blessed visitation of the Divine Spirit, did I not see the grasses bow their heads, and cross their slender fingers in the precious sign — the beloved, awful, sublime recognition of the Crucified? Why should I not consecrate myself with it? Let me make it upon my breast, and wear it in my heart while I live; and when I die let my arms be folded in that form over my bosom, and my feet be crossed like a true crusader knight."

Thus he spoke, and thus he felt; and in this spirit he went up to Palestine and Jerusalem.

There he entered zealously into his work; he taught and preached, and lived an ascetic life, having stripped himself, literally, of everything but bare necessaries.

If he was disappointed in some of the things he saw there, or did not see there, he beheld sufficient to feed and satisfy a mind as ecstatic and visionary as was his. A little thing went a great way with him. His faith was large; and according to his faith it was unto him.

He dwelt with most satisfaction on the unchanged topographical features of the land, the natural phenomena, and the manners and customs of the people of the country.

"These surely are the same as when the Christ walked here," he said. He was certain a light like that of the Shekinah still lingered around the Temple site.

"Is not this the land of inspiration?" he exclaimed. "Does not the voice of the prophets and the Holy One of Israel still pulsate in the air? Where once he showed his visible presence, will he not hear the cry of supplication, and answer? — will he not help and deliver as in no other place?"

To Crosslett it was natural that the Jew and the Moslem should believe that one prayer said within the ancient walls was worth a thousand said elsewhere.

He went with the Jews to that majestic fragment of the Temple Enclosure, whose cyclopean blocks of stone need no architect's authentication, — the "wailing place" of the outcast people, as near as they can venture to the forbidden ground of the *sanctum sanctorum*, where they raise their prayers and lamentations for their lost glory; and he wept and prayed with them: "How long, O Lord? how long shall thy holy place be trampled down of the Gentiles?"

As he beheld the sheep led to the slaughter — led as he had never seen it in any other country, the pathetic significance of the scene touched him to the quick, as he recalled the words of prophesy and their exalted application: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth." He could never see the sight without being penetrated afresh with its heartbreaking poignancy.

Nor could he pass the wheat-market in Jerusalem without pausing in the open archways at the entrance, and watching the merchants give "good measure," they thus fulfilling, unwittingly, the words of the Master whom he served: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom."

With renewed wonder he saw this each time literally done. The peck-like measure is filled with wheat, which is pressed down, and shaken in three different directions, continual additions causing it to rise high above the rim in a cone-like form. Pressed at the apex with the knuckles, more grain is added, till it begins to run over; when, if the purchaser is unprovided with a sack, the measure is deftly lifted, and the contents are poured into the bosom of his outer garment. This, being confined by the girdle at his waist, is capable of holding a large amount of such provender; indeed, it is the favourite receptacle in the East for carrying any object which may conveniently fit there, or for concealing anything which the wearer may not wish to be seen, such as stolen property, as too often happens. To this day, there are in Jerusalem two kinds of measure — the common or ordinary, and the "good measure" advocated by Jesus.

But, above most things, Crosslett was impressed by the peculiar recurrent glows which succeed the sunsets in the Holy City. To this wonderful radiance, to which we have repeatedly referred, it is difficult to do justice in a mere description.

When he saw the glorious sight repeated, evening after evening, dying out and reviving, often till seven times, it gave him pause, and made him consider. The glow was more than bright. A red-gold ring of light, as intense in the east as in the west, in the north as in the south, encircled the entire heavens. The hoary head of the ancient Holy City surrounded with this annular glory, like that of a saint or martyr, was a spectacle of unspeakable grandeur. It seemed Nature's and God's canonisation of Jerusalem.

"Perhaps it is the sign of the Son of Man," murmured Crosslett — "the light of the Shekinah withdrawn to the heavens from the desecrated temple."

Among the few in Jerusalem with whom Crosslett became early acquainted was a Franciscan monk of the name of Scherer. He had barely reached his prime, and, as his name implied, he was German. In his religious life, he had retained, unsoured and unspoiled, the pleasant genial disposition with which he had been born. Under the coarse brown habit and rope girdle of his order beat the warm generous heart of a true man, always ready to respond with unaffected sympathy and loving aid to the appeal of grief or misery, bringing comfort to the wretched; while he could rejoice with the rejoicing none the less naturally because he could weep with those who weep.

Seldom, even in the coldest weather, did he avail himself of the guarded sufferance of his order to draw the cowl of his garb over those sunny locks of his, that shone like pure gold; and the smiles and kindly words that made beautiful his lips were ever reflected in the mild blue eyes of this worthy son of St. Francis. He had been blessed with a noble physique. The solid muscular limbs covered by the heavy woollen cassock suggested by their action that they might have had a military training, — that, one day, their owner might

have led a charge of cavalry, or marched at the head of a column to victory.

It was with a sense of amusement as well as surprise that the Franciscan first beheld Crosslett, wondering to what new, unknown order this strange figure belonged. He took the earliest opportunity of interrogating the late comer; and soon discovered "where the land lay."

In the beginning there may have been something of jealousy on the part of the Franciscan, who, perhaps, felt that Crosslett was encroaching on his pastures and methods. But this did not last.

If anything, Crosslett outdid the monk in his ascetic life, his simple raiment outrivalling simplicity, he never wearing a covering of any sort to his head, having no dwelling-house or regular meals, and his feet being always unshod.

This last comparatively insignificant point, assumed an importance out of all proportion to its value. The monk wore sandals of the simplest sort — each a mere sole of leather strapped to the foot. These, he anxiously explained, were a concession permitted only under certain circumstances; and, it must be admitted, they were a necessary but inadequate protection from the rude pavements and filth of the Jerusalem streets.

It was impossible for two such men to come in contact without falling into argument and controversy. Yet though words might run high and hot between them, they were both too kind and good at heart not to acknowledge each other's nobleness as well as frailty, and, no matter how fierce might rage their discussions, they never parted without a smile and a good wish, though each remained unmoved in his belief.

Scherer flattered himself that he had impressed Crosslett with the beauties of the Roman Catholic faith; while the latter confidently believed that, at heart, Scherer was a convinced and converted man, who could not break away from his conventual vows.

The monk, aggressive and sophistic, often pushed Crosslett rather hard, taking him unawares. But, in general, the American was fully competent to hold his

ground, and give as good as, or even better than he received.

Once, in one of the warmest of those polemic encounters, Brother Scherer had given Crosslett a thrust of the old rusty sword, long past effective service, telling him his church went no further back than Henry VIII.

The latter, while denying this, quietly reminded the Franciscan that even admitting, for argument's sake, that he were correct in his statement, evil or error was not made respectable because of its antiquity; nor was truth the less adorable though it were revealed but yesterday.

"We have simply returned to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Anglican Church," he said. "We have reformed, rejecting the errors and evil ways which had crept in, and refusing to receive the modern dogmas that have been erected, believing them to be untaught by Holy Scripture. That you have many beautiful things of which we deny ourselves, as unnecessary and dangerous luxuries, may be true. The burnt child dreads the fire; and there are some of us who will not draw near and warm ourselves at your devotional hearth, nor enjoy the pleasant glow, nor admire the beauty of the flame, considering them indulgences of dangerous, or at least of lax, tendency."

Of course, Scherer hooted at all this, and called it heresy — the rankest schism. He even threw in Crosslett's face the undeniable fact that he was not satisfied with his own church.

The feeling ran unusually high on this occasion; yet, when they parted, the warm-hearted German could cherish no bitterness.

"Good-bye, St. George," he said. "God bless you, my brother; and bring you safe into the fold of holy mother Church, lest, self-deceived, you perish in outer darkness."

While Crosslett answered:

"God grant that you may have the light, the hope and the faith that I have this day. The Heavenly Father bring you into the Kingdom."

Scherer looked upon Crosslett with eyes of pity and of love.

"How could I be angry with such as he is, who so confidently believes in what he speaks," he said, "who lives so stainless and so self-denying a life? What a pity he is not a good Catholic!"

Their intimacy grew apace; and who knows how much, in the end, the belief of each tempered that of the other?

Scherer, at least on one occasion, even admitted Crosslett to his cell, or room, in the monastery. It was bare and poverty-stricken, in truth; yet to Crosslett it was luxuriously appointed. For, dissatisfied with himself, he had, of late, passed into more rigid and exacting ordeals, and crucifixion of the flesh.

Brother Scherer had joined in calling him St. George, nor was it quite in the mocking spirit in which it was first done by those in Jerusalem who, finding out his Christian name, thought it a good joke to give it the prefix of "Saint."

Crosslett could not long hide from himself the fact that he had failed to accomplish in Jerusalem that which he had hoped and expected. It is "a mixed multitude," with the usual consequences. He was disappointed and disgusted with the spirit of the people, their miserable quarrels, their utter want of forbearance toward one another, and the jealousies, the backbiting and vindictive slanders which scrupled not to attack the noblest and the most innocent.

He himself was not exempt from the tongue-lashing. But he did not wonder, for he had heard the patriarchs and bishops, priests and archimandrites made the subjects of the most abominable stories, intrigues and scandals.

He longed for seclusion.

At last he said to Scherer:

"In my experience of the Jerusalem of to-day, I am not surprised that our Lord found a great relief in escaping to quiet Bethany from the slander-loving city with its cabals of Pharisee and Sadducee, the proud pretensions to zeal and sanctity, and the notorious emptiness of real

good, in the priests and people, — 'the generation of vipers,' as John the Baptist called them."

The stalwart Franciscan, while sympathising with him, shook his head and smiled.

"Don't mind them," he said. Then he sarcastically added, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

The following day Scherer was told, "St. George is gone."

It was true. He had left Jerusalem.

After many wanderings in remote and desolate places and among the fellaheen and Bedawin, he took up his abiding place in the deserted lodge of a garden of cucumbers. Crosslett had at one time been a student of medicine; and, practising among those simple people the healing art, he was always received by them gladly as the "hakîm."

Thus it was that he was in that lonely spot to which Hilwe, beaten out, had dragged herself with the last efforts of her expiring strength on her escape from Ain Farah.

It was St. George who raised her fainting head.

"My child is perishing of want," she said.

The mother-love supreme in her, she thought not of herself but of her child.

"My daughter, be of good cheer; help is at hand," came the answer.

"Save my child," she hoarsely ejaculated, and could say no more.

It was enough. Almost worthy of the saintly name bestowed in mockery upon him, Crosslett, with the tact and kindly helpfulness so characteristic of the true American, had hastened to their assistance, doing everything in his power to relieve and restore them.

He not only brought water to assuage their thirst, but such food as his scanty store provided, regardless of his own wants, was freely bestowed upon them. He waited on them as if he had been their servant, and could not do enough for them.

He would have had them remain longer, so as to become more thoroughly rested and restored; but, after a brief repose, Hilwe was eager to be gone.

With the healthy robust nature of the peasant, she and her child had that strong recuperative force which is too often weakened or lost in civilised life; and, on receiving the needed sustenance, they had quickly revived, and in Hilwe's opinion had soon recovered sufficiently to resume their journey.

As to the mental trouble which distressed Hilwe, Crosslett was not as successful in ministering to that. He was too finely strung not to perceive that a burden which was weighing her down rested upon her soul. At first he could only surmise what the peculiar character of this might be, and had to content himself with giving her such general counsel and consolation as he considered adapted to her case. Yet when leaving, in her gratitude she gave way, and, confiding in him, while thanking him, confessed to a certain extent her peculiar trials, and the danger threatening her should she fall into the hands of her own people.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THOUGH Crosslett had tried to convey to Hilwe on her departure certain directions as to the route she should take, his advice had but an imperfect effect upon her. It was like the blurred impression of a mould or matrix, spoiled in the making. The one dominant feeling possessing her was that she must hasten on her way to escape from some impending woe, without loss of time. The direction she might take continued, for the present, comparatively a secondary matter. Nor did the places she passed through greatly impress her. In her wearied state she felt irritated and vexed at the hindrance, the annoyance, or discomfort of the various impediments which she encountered. But that they detained her and held her back was her chief sense of pain and grievance.

Yet, after a while, she made an effort to recall Crosslett's advice.

She had come to a shallow wady, the bottom of which was scored by a deep-cut watercourse, which was now dried up in the long-continued drought. This parched river-bed was crossed by a parapetless bridge of a single span, light and airy, of such marvellous structure that at first sight it declared its builders to be Roman and none other. There seemed not an extra stone in the entire work. Its simplicity equalled its strength. Matched and cemented together with a cohesion which had resisted the concerted storm-sieges of nearly two thousand years, not one of the broad slabs of its roadway was displaced.

The entire bottom of the valley and the slopes on each side were heaped, many feet deep, with rounded boulders, the greater number of which were larger than a man's head. These had been swept down from the adjoining country, for many miles. Not a particle of soil remained. It had, ages ago, been washed away.

Such a disrupted pass was trying to the footsore mother with her living burden. The bridge, which she crossed almost trippingly, stood, in its unhurt perfection, an accentuated contrast, in the midst of the accumulated and almost impassable debris. But she struggled through the difficulties and climbed up the opposite slope, though by this time the fatigue she had endured began again to tell upon her.

She pondered as she halted beside a fragment of ancient pavement to rest awhile.

Were not these the Roman bridge and Roman road that the hakîm had mentioned?

She thought so, and blamed herself for not having paid more attention, and puzzled her brain to recall exactly what he had told her in regard to them. Her continual wandering had confused and bewildered her. Was she to follow the course of the highway? or was she to take an abrupt departure from it? She could not remember, but thought it more likely he had advised her to strike out across the country, leaving the road, in which she would be sure to meet travellers and in all probability enemies.

Half-way up the slope she had passed a fallen mono-

lith, on which were carvings and a Latin inscription. It was the pillar, — a great columnar milestone, — with the record in honour of the Roman emperor under whom the road had been built. Such of the column as was not concealed by the rubbish in which it lay partly buried, kept telling its story, in the contracted Latin way, to a people to whom it was an unknown tongue.

Soon she came to a more extensive stretch of pavement, in a remarkable state of preservation. Though century after century of mountain torrent and storm had undermined, scooped out, and torn away the foundations of the ancient road-bed, so that the present highway, running beside it, was at least from eight to ten feet lower, the solid pavement, lifted on high, like a wide sidewalk, still remained intact.

Those Romans were masterly fellows. The more we know about them and the works they left behind them, the more we respect them. Their aqueducts, bridges, roadways, and architectural monuments in general are substantial evidences of what they could accomplish. They conquered a country, and, with a broad conception of the principles of government, made the people of it their housekeepers. They evidently were men who did what they had to do with all their might.

But to Hilwe the name Roman was but a word — a meaningless designation for a road or bridge. The deeds of the Cæsars and the great commanders were unknown to her, and the voices of the orators, statesmen, philosophers and poets, which have made notorious or immortalised the sunny land of inspiration — of art and arms, science, song and thought, had never reached her ears.

Poor Hilwe! She did not long delay. She would not take the time to rest sufficiently. But, leaving behind the Roman road, she made a decided detour from it, at a wide angle.

The country traversed was mostly wild and uncultivated. She did not mind that so much; what troubled her more was that she found no water, — for a drought had been long prevailing through a wide section of the land. In her isolation at Ain Farah this was unknown

to her. Though, as we have seen, even there, the volume of water had, latterly, greatly diminished, and, to the observant eye, skilled in noting the natural signs, had given tokens of soon ceasing altogether.

The self-abnegating Crosslett had not let her know that he had given her, and her little Talmai, on their departure, the last of his supply of food and water. Had he informed her of this, she would not have taken it. It was pitifully meagre, and was soon spent. The food was a handful of parched wheat, the water scarcely a cupful.

She searched with feverish eagerness many a hollow and moist-appearing depression, hoping to find water; but every such place she came to, and which in ordinary times would have supplied her wants, had long been exhausted and dried up.

In her ignorance of the state of things prevailing, she thought she was under a peculiar judgment, and that a curse was upon her for what she had done.

"Even the water dries up before me," she exclaimed, in the bitterness of her soul, "and the springs disappear at my approach. The displeasure of Allah follows me wherever I go. I am unfortunate. And he, my beloved, in whom my soul trusted, is taken from me. I have none to defend me."

At the thought she sank upon the ground, and burst into tears, and could no longer restrain her lamentations, remembering what the aga had told her as to Hassan's death.

"O Hassan, thou canst not hear me! Why art thou so far from me? Why art thou not here to protect thy little one? Alas! have they not told me thou art slain in a far country? Never again shall I behold thee. Oh, my beloved, the darkness gathers about me, and the thick darkness of sorrow hides the way!"

The prattle of her child recalled her to the pressing necessities which were closing upon her. She brushed away her tears, and arose.

"Yet will I not be cast down," she said. "Talmai, with the help of Allah, thy mother will not let thee perish. O God, have mercy upon the son of my sorrow!"

She pushed forward with the energy of desperation. It seemed as if a new strength had been vouchsafed her — a power she had never before known.

Suddenly she came out on an open place — sort of plateau, and before her rose a high and rugged tell with a village on the summit.

It was like and yet unlike Malha. Up the terraced heights, olives and vines had been planted, and every little space and bit of ground among the rocks, often of only a few square feet, had been taken advantage of and cultivated.

She thought it was a dream. She could scarcely believe her senses.

"Is not my mind wandering?" she asked herself. "Hath not my sorrow distracted me?"

As she drew nearer, she saw that one side of the tell descended with abrupt declivities into an unusually deep valley, extending to the northward. But in one of the nearer hollows was an inclosed area. Trees of a large size grew near it.

"It is the fountain," she said. "Every village has its ain. I shall get water to quench our thirst, my Talmai. Allah hath not forsaken us. He hath heard my cry. It was wrong to doubt him. Have I not known this of old?"

With this confidence she advanced till she stood on the edge of the slope overlooking the fountain, which, being at a considerable distance from the village, she made sure she should be able to approach unobserved. What was her astonishment, therefore, to behold the entire of the inclosure fronting and including the fountain filled with a crowd of struggling, wrangling and lamenting women.

She could not understand what it meant. She had never seen anything like it. It seemed as if all the women of the village had collected there.

The noise of their complaint, and occasionally the words of their harangues and exclamations reached the spot where she had stopped, transfixed with wonder at the sight of this turbulent gathering.

"Will the heavens have no pity? Will they not send the timely rain?"

And again:

"How long will Allah withhold his blessing? Surely he is dealing bitterly with us."

Expressions such as these frequently reached her. But oftener came the voice of anger, of sharp reproach, and of strife that ended not alone in words.

"Hast thou no shame, Salha? Dost thou want all the water for thyself? Wouldst thou leave none for any one else? Lo, I and my little ones are consumed with thirst!"

The speaker, wrought to the pitch of frenzy by her own words and the picture they presented, fell upon the offending Salha, and tried to push her aside and wrench her water-pitcher from her.

Incidents such as this were common.

There were no actual blows; but the scuffling was incessant. All the women had their water-pots with them, carried in different positions; some of the more importunate, tired of waiting, would pass these vessels over the heads of the other women to those nearer the fountain, hoping to get a small quantity of water, and occasionally, in the struggling, one of these pitchers was dashed from the hands of its owner and broken to pieces upon the pavement, the precious liquid it contained being spilt. This produced further lamentation.

In her eagerness to know all, Hilwe drew nearer, and soon saw what the dreadful sight meant.

The fountain was a noble one, and had been built about with unusual care and at much cost. It was fronted with a wide semicircular court, handsomely paved, and inclosed with a parapet of cut stone. To this a flight of steps, of easy descent, gave access. Upon the steps a few of the women rested, either escaped from the warfare with a scanty supply of water, or waiting their turn to approach the fountain. But the great body of the sufferers stood vociferating and contending, crowded within the inclosure; and always more than a dozen women immediately surrounded the point where the water came out.

The stream, so abundant at other times, that leaped and spouted through the opening in glad beautifulness

or spendthrift lavishness and was carried off in a broad open sluice and conduit into the lower valley, was now reduced to a miserable attenuated dribble, which latterly threatened to cease altogether, often only dripping intermittently, drop by drop, over the green slime that marked the spot.

It was a torture to the poor unfortunate villagers to collect sufficient for their most urgent wants. It would be difficult to measure the trial they were enduring — all the suffering entailed by being deprived of water, except in such small quantity that it was almost a mockery, and an aggravation of the affliction.

An exterior and slightly higher wall guarded the point where the steps descended to the paved inclosure. On the broad flat top a young man was stretched at full length, seemingly asleep. With the exception of a companion of about his own age, who reclined in a similar position, at a short distance off, he was the only man from the village who was present.

He was not asleep, as a closer observation showed, which made his apparent equanimity the more remarkable. His gaze was intently fixed on the scene enacted before him; he never once withdrew his eyes; he lost not a single movement or cry of the seething throng; but neither by word nor motion nor expression of countenance, nor any other outward sign, did he give the least evidence of sympathy or feeling in the pitiful contention.

He and his comrade had probably been sent there by the village sheik as a precaution, to prevent any dangerous outbreak or act of injustice, or excess, and to keep the peace, as far as possible, under the extraordinary circumstances.

A gentleman, accompanied by his dragoman, and preceded by a cavass in gold-embroidered jacket, all being mounted on horseback, had come up through the by-road, and, attracted by the noise of the tumultuous assemblage, rode aside to see what it meant.

It was the American consul who was returning from some official investigation.

Horrified at what he beheld, he questioned the young man from the village regarding it.

"Why do they wait till this late hour?" he asked. "Why do the women come all together? Cannot some of them come earlier, and so avoid this terrible scene?"

The young man at once arose, and courteously saluted. He had the pleasing features and slender well-knit figure so frequently seen in the men of the Palestine villages. Above all, he had their inimitable grace.

"Ah," he said, "this that thou seest has been going on since early morning. From early morning till late in the evening, for nearly six weeks, shortly after the drought began, this has been our burden and sorrow. There has been no respite."

The tone of the man's voice said more than the words. Though even now he restrained himself from any marked display of feeling, there were tears in his voice.

"My God, this is horrible!" exclaimed the consul. "It is worse than I supposed."

"It is worse than we have ever known."

"Is there no help?"

"None. Except Allah sends us rain."

"Are there no other fountains or wells in the neighbourhood from which you could be supplied?"

A sad laugh, in which mingled something of scornful pride, broke from the young fellow's lips.

"There is no ain in all the valley like ours. It has never before been known to withhold its water. When all the other springs and wells were dry, our ain was still flowing. They that were thirsting came to us from all the countryside around, and we gave them freely of our living water. Not the dull heavy water of the well, but lightsome, living water, fresh, and full of strength, out of the heart of the earth. If our ain is dried up, to whom then shall we go? There is no one to give unto us as we gave unto them."

The consul was deeply moved. The scene of the struggling women vividly reminded him of the celebrated painting by Poussin representing the Children of Israel in the wilderness, when there was no water for the people to drink, and they were perishing with thirst,

till Moses brought water out of the rock for them. But here was no Moses to deliver.

Especially was he touched with the young man's courteous grace, preserved in the midst of such an affliction.

"We Western people are savages and brutes as compared with these Orientals," he said. "They shame us with their fine manners — their natural politeness."

He recalled an incident of the morning, when meeting a peasant who was carrying a sack of wheat to the mill on his donkey. He had wished the man "Good morning," which in the Arabic has a fuller and warmer significance than our cramped phrase, which has almost lost its meaning, — the former having more than the heartiness of the Irishman when, in the original of the exuberant old Erse tongue, he wishes "the top of the morning to you."

After salaaming, and returning the consul's wish, the peasant added, with an unmistakable sincerity, "Here am I, a poor man — a fellah, and you, who are an honourable man, of high position, stop and speak to me and give me a good wish. Now you have made me happy for the rest of the day. Surely it is always the truly great who are gracious and condescending."

Struck with wonder at the reply, the consul drew rein, and made suitable acknowledgment; adding, when the man was departing: "Take care of your soul."

With upward wave of the hand, the answer came, quick as a flash: "God will do that."

"There truly is more in this people than meets the eye," was the conclusion of the stranger.

And now, as the consul waited by the fountain, thinking of the feeling in the words of the poor peasant, and listening to the statements of the young man, noting, too, all his fortitude and courteousness in the midst of his sorrow, while the wail of the women ascended to them, he felt more keenly the bitterness of the affliction through which they were passing.

"Poor women! It is a matter of life and death to them," he said. "Who could expect them to bear it any better than they are doing?"

And the man simply answered, "Yea," mournfully shaking his shapely head.

At this his companion aroused himself.

"He has not quenched his thirst, or tasted a drop of water since the morning," he said.

"That is as nothing," came the reply of the noble fellow. "Are there not sick among us and women and children who need it far more than I do?"

"Ah!" said the consul, as, reluctantly bidding the young men farewell, he left the stricken villagers, and went upon his way, "is not this young man like to him whom Christ, beholding, loved? Would not the Master love one like this? Would he not let him lean his head upon his breast? I no longer wonder that He chose to be born of this people. For, though it seems strangely to be overlooked, Christ had in his veins the blood of the ancient people of the land — the Canaanites, Moabites, Hittites, Ammonites and others, as well as that of Israel. I am glad of it. There is a profound meaning in it."

CHAPTER XLIX

NOW all this while Hilwe remained near, and her heart was cast down when she heard and saw the trouble of the place, and how the drought had dried up the fountain till there was not sufficient water for the inhabitants.

"There is no help or abiding-place here for me and my child," she said; "nor can they who have it not for themselves spare enough water to quench our thirst. I could not ask it. God help them and us. I must even depart as I came. Are we ever to be wanderers, seeking rest and finding none? Surely I have fallen upon evil days; there is none here I can ask to give us a morsel of bread or a draught of water. I am an outcast of my own people. Come, Talmai, let us be going. As long as I have thee to care for, I must take courage and hope for deliverance."

She raised the boy astride of her shoulder, after the fashion of the country, and with bowed head went up by the path that led beneath the village, and so by the steep ascent behind the fountain and the trees.

An old woman sat by the wayside, resting. Her water-pot, lowered from her head, stood near. As Hilwe came by, the salutations of the land, with the usual good wishes, were exchanged between them. Then, as she thought of the sufferings of her child, she could no longer refrain.

"Alas! how can one as wretched as I am wish a blessing to any one?" she cried.

"What aileth thee, my daughter?" asked the old woman.

"There is no water, and my child hath not quenched his thirst since early to-day. For the love of God, if thou canst, give him to drink that he perish not. I thought not to ask water of any one. I thought to find it among the rocks. But the springs dried up before me, as though I was accursed."

The first impulse of the aged woman was to seize the water-pot and give to the thirsting, as she had been accustomed to do from her girlhood. Then she paused, remembering all. Her head drooped on her breast, a flush of shame on her wrinkled cheek and forehead.

"I have been dreaming," she said. "I thought myself once more a young maiden coming from the ain to the village, balancing upon my head my kulleh filled from the cool, plenteous flood. Never was there an ain like ours. We were proud of it, and gave liberally of the water to all that asked. We could not build a place beautiful enough for it. It was like an angel of God. It made glad all the hillside, and kissed the valley till it smiled back in corn and wine and oil."

The sunshine of her childhood came, and once more lighted up and beautified her aged face as she spoke.

"Never till now have I known it to fail," she continued. "To-day I stood before it from early morn till this hour, waiting my turn, while the scanty drops trickled down, and my strength gave out. Some of the younger women at last took pity on me, and let me come near. They

knew my daughter was lying sick of a fever. I am ashamed to tell thee — but the water is not enough for our wants. Nevertheless I shall share it with thee, and Allah replenish our store."

"Nay," said Hilwe, "I cannot deprive thee of it. I am grieved for thy trouble. It was wrong of me to ask thee. The thought of my child betrayed me. God bless thee for thy kindness, all the same."

The old woman at once arose.

"Thou art a stranger and a wayfarer," she said; "I cannot deny thee." She raised the water-vessel with trembling hands. "Drink, thou and thy little one, in the name of the All-Merciful. Thou art welcome. Drink."

She held the water to Talmai's lips, and when he had drank, she gave also to Hilwe, who could no longer refuse.

"Blessed be thou and thy people," exclaimed Hilwe, as she kissed the old woman's hand. "God send thee prosperity and peace. Thy heart is right. Thou hast shown kindness to the unfortunate. Thou hast restored my life and the life of my child this day."

With the usual superabundant exchange of salutations they parted.

The old woman returned to her sick daughter in the village.

Hilwe wearily plodded up the tedious ascent, taking the by-road, which presently passed into the highway. This recently had been greatly improved, through the enforced labour of the peasants. It had been straightened and much shortened by cutting out unnecessary curves. It was now a fine macadamised road, though it still, where necessary, wound up and down the steeper hills with many a zigzag course. But it was no pleasant sight to the poor fellaheen, as they remembered the days of unremunerative toil expended on it by themselves, their wives, and their children. They valued not the improvement.

"It is naught to us," they said. "What doth it profit us?"

The day, at length, was drawing to a close, and the

wanderer began anxiously to consider where she might find a resting-place for the night. She had left the highway far behind; the country was unusually rough and broken, but the fear she had of the main roads made it comparatively pleasant to her. The brush and scrub were so wild and thick they greatly impeded her way, but she pushed on as if she scarcely noticed this, eagerly watching for some hollow or cave where she and Talmai might take shelter.

It was a lonely place, with the desolate aspect of a wilderness. Not a bird was visible. The gay flowers which, earlier in the season, had lent their charms to beautify it, had gone to seed and were withered and dried, consumed by the fierceness of the sun and want of rain. Only such plants and shrubs as could well sustain the drought were to be seen among the thorn-bushes with their spiny, contorted growths. They represented millenniums of endurance. The thorn of the crucifixion was there, and the stubborn burnet with its clusters of dull reddish flowers grew in a tangled mass with the yellow prickly broom and abounding thyme. Defiant of the rainless season, these held their ground as if by divine right.

More than once Hilwe had halted, thinking she heard a signal call. The profound stillness of the place was awe-inspiring, and made the least sound unduly audible.

"I am growing timorous and foolish," she tried to assure herself. "It is naught but the cry of the partridge."

But again came the peculiar sound, on the right, and much nearer. It was answered, after a few seconds, on the left.

This time there could be no mistake. She recognised the signals used by the villagers.

Once more they were repeated, and now close at hand, and startlingly clear.

"We are tracked," she said. "They are pursuing after us, and will take us. We are lost."

Hardly had she spoken when she saw a number of men pouring over an adjoining ridge. They uttered a shout of triumph as they came upon her.

She clasped her boy more tightly to her, and dashed forward, hoping to find some place in which to hide, and so evade her pursuers.

Vain hope! She was surrounded.

The glaring eyes, the dark, wolfish faces, how they terrified her! A piercing scream parted her lips as she saw they were men of Malha. This was answered by a shout of derision and mocking laughter.

They dragged her from behind a thorn-bush where she had attempted to conceal herself.

"Have mercy!" she cried. "Deal not so cruelly with me, for the sake of the child."

"We have searched for thee many days, and now thou art delivered into our hands. Doubt not we shall deal righteously with thee," was their reply.

They questioned her closely as to herself and the child.

"Whose is the lad?" they asked.

She hung her head and wept.

"Hide nothing from us," they said. "Tell us everything without dissembling, lest it be worse with thee," — in this, and otherwise, implying they would not use extreme measures in her case.

She told them all, and frankly answered their questions.

They heard her quietly to the end, without expressing anger. And yet there was in their manner that which did not deceive her.

Knowing what she knew, she could have but little hope. She remembered what Kadra had told her. The fate of Amne had haunted her ever since she had known it.

As she saw Abd-el-nour and her uncle Ismail among the men who had hunted her, it only added to her fears, and increased her doubts of receiving mercy. From the savage custom governing in a case like this, they would appear as the chief accusers and executioners.

"She hath confessed; she is self-condemned," they said. "She hath brought this disgrace upon us. It is our duty to wipe the stain off. Her life is the only expiation."

The twilight was dying out on the hillside. The last surges of day were breaking in golden waves against the topmost heights. The monotonous blue of the sky was fading to a pale gray tint, with a few greenish lights at the horizon. Night would soon be upon them. The night of death was closing upon Hilwe and her son.

"It will be dark before we reach Malha," the men told themselves.

As they hastened on their way, dragging her with them, she heard them mutter that they would confine her in some secret place for the present, or until the morrow.

After it was quite dark, they were still leading their captives, — the sad-eyed weary mother and her son, — to the dread fate decreed them. To the rocky defiles, through which they passed, difficult to penetrate in the daylight, the darkness added a thousand horrors. They were taking her to the Black Valley, — that nameless abomination, — that place of mystery, of fear, and violence, of swift judgment and pitiless execution, the tomb of the unchaste and the degraded.

They were taking her there. It could have but one meaning.

All the way, — to her a Via Dolorosa, — every trembling step she took in the uncertain gloom, she thought of Amne's fate as prophetic of her own. She was walking to her death.

And was this to be Hilwe's end, — branded as a wanton and an outcast by her own people, her soul smitten from the body, even her child overwhelmed in the destruction which had overtaken her?

She had appealed to them in vain. In the black misery of that night who can tell what she suffered? The horror of it had struck her silent. She had no words which could express it.

She suppressed her sighs, lest she should awaken Talmai.

Once a passionate fit of sobbing burst from her lips.

"Oh, if Kadra but knew," she said, "she would not rest till she had done something to deliver us!"

CHAPTER L

THE St. Georges are rare characters. There are not many of them to be found in the world. Nor are the St. Theodores who trample down the mud-wallowing saurian of fleshly desire much more common than the virgin Sir Galahads, brave knights of the Holy Grail, who each can say of himself, "I never felt the kiss of love nor maiden's hand in mine." The nineteenth century will present few if any candidates for canonisation. But among that few, it is highly probable, no more worthy name will appear upon the blood-blanched roll than that of George Crosslett, he who was derisively named St. George by those who might easily have discovered among themselves more suitable subjects for mockery.

When Crosslett found himself once more alone, the retreating figure of Hilwe and her child fast disappearing in the distance, his heart began to misgive him, and he blamed himself in that he had let her depart, unprotected, exposed to so many dangers, and with so little provision for the way.

The few words in which she had told him her trouble had deeply impressed him. He fancied she looked like Hagar with her son Ishmael, which only helped to stimulate his sympathies.

Yet, with existing prejudices, how could he have accompanied her? She would not have permitted it. He had given her his last morsel of food, his last cupful of water. What more could be expected of him? It might well seem it should have been easy for him to say he had done what he could, and so rest satisfied. But that was not his temper or his spirit.

Something in this girl-mother and her son had deeply moved him. How virginal she seemed! Her great innocent eyes had appealed to him. They had touched his gentle manly heart, from which woman had been so long shut out, in a way of which he was scarcely conscious. It was pity, and something more than pity.

How dreary and woe-begone were his surroundings, — the despoiled field, stripped of its fruits, the broken-down fence and hedge. Fit symbol of the daughter of Zion, the booth or lodge of withered boughs, left standing in the midst, had ceased to be of much protection or pleasure to look at. Its upper staging, whence the owners had kept watch over the garden, and which, since their desertion on the gathering in of the crop, had been Crosslett's sleeping-place, had meagre shelter in the lean branches, the shrivelled leaves having mostly fallen away. To the left was the pile of ashes, the remains of the nightly watch-fires which had lighted up the place and shown the approach of marauders. Back of the booth was the shallow excavation in the clay bank, which afforded a poor retreat in the worst weather, and had left its too manifest stains on Crosslett's raiment.

It all was wretched enough. It was the only home he had, if home it could be called. Yet what a peaceful solitude he had found there, with such golden experiences of spiritual communion as tongue may not reveal!

Almost unconsciously he had formed the determination that he would follow Hilwe.

He had little or no belongings of consequence to burden himself with or leave behind. He could start at a moment's notice. Why should he regret turning his back upon the place?

His small supply of food and water was gone. He had given it away. He must seek elsewhere to renew it. Why not take the direction which she had taken as well as any other? It was a natural conclusion.

"I shall follow her, afar off," he said. "I shall see that no harm befalls her."

But Hilwe had had too great a start. Before Crosslett set out she had long passed out of sight, and, not having adhered to his directions as to the route, simply from not comprehending them and from her devious wanderings in search of water, he saw nothing of her till he caught a glimpse of her at the point where she crossed the main road, leaving it behind her.

He saw the slender figure bowed with weariness,

struggling forward, the child bound to her back, and, again he thought of Hagar and Ishmael.

He hastened with all his might to keep her in view. But meanwhile, before overtaking her, the men of Malha burst upon the scene.

It was easy to understand the meaning of what he beheld. He saw them drag her from her place of concealment, and heard her cry for mercy. What man, with far less righteous enthusiasm than pertained to Crosslett, could withstand such an appeal?

Detecting him following them, twice they had driven him back, with rough usage. He had begged them to refrain from committing any act of violence upon the unfortunate woman whom they had captured.

"What hast thou to do with us?" they angrily exclaimed. "Who art thou? Whence comest thou? We know thee not. Thou hast no authority over us to interfere with us in what is our own affair, and none of thine. Beware! Take heed, lest we deal with thee according to thy deserts. Go thy way, and trouble us not."

This sounded too much like the ancient voice of iniquity which had once dominated the land, and the echoes of which still lingered there, to pass unrebuked of Crosslett. He hesitated not in speaking his mind, finally threatening them with the interference of the authorities.

His denunciations galled them.

"This is a dangerous fellow," said Abd-el-nour. "He will make complaint of us in Jerusalem. And who can tell what may come of it?"

"Thou speakest truly," acquiesced Ismail.

"Let us make an end of him," suggested Abd-el-nour. "This is my advice."

The others urged caution, shaking their heads dubiously.

"This is not the place to do it," they said. "Let us go farther."

But they freely joined in preventing Crosslett following them, and when next he approached, drove him back with increased fury.

"He is no more than a gad-fly," they shouted. They attacked him with such violence that when they resumed their journey, he was left lying upon the ground, unconscious, and bleeding from more than one wound. A little more of their stoning would have made him a martyr.

Hilwe perceived the scuffling and contention, but knew not what it meant, and supposed it to be some dispute among themselves.

"Is he dead?" asked those of the party who had remained on watch with Hilwe, on hearing certain remarks.

"If he is — and it is likely that he is dead — he has brought it on himself," replied Abd-el-nour. "We are blameless."

They hastened more rapidly on their way, and talked more freely as to what they purposed doing with Hilwe, so that she overheard them. She had not ceased to use every opportunity to implore their compassion. But their brutal replies robbed her of all hope. They were evidently spurring themselves up to the accomplishment of the crime they had decided on committing. Their murderous attack on Crosslett had only whetted their appetite and further exasperated them.

Unfounded hatred, the parent of indefinite vindictiveness, is one of the most difficult of evils to contend with. There is no arguing with it. It knows no law, is without reason, and has no mercy. It is from this that, often, the most detestable and unaccountable murders and other crimes which shock civilisation have their origin.

It was clear from their conversation that the Thar — the blood-feud between Malha and Bettîr — had a predominant influence in their determination as to Hilwe's doom.

"To have been as one of the foolish women was evil sufficient, of unbearable shame, and worthy of death," said her uncle Ismail; "but that a man of Bettîr should have humbled her — for that there is no forgiveness."

On which they all applauded.

"It is according to our ancient custom," they said, "that thou shouldst lead in wiping out the stain."

"True! see thou adherest to it," said Abd-el-nour. "I am ready to do my part."

An extraordinarily grim expression, one of savage pride mingled with awful implacability, sat on Ismail's features.

"I know my duty," he said. "Yea, I shall not fail to perform it. Yet it were as well to refrain from the final act till we have the decision of the sheik upon it."

To this the majority assented.

"Thou dost not need to wait the sheik's judgment," interrupted Abd-el-nour, whose conceit had never recovered the wound it had received in Hilwe's humiliating rejection of him.

But the rest continued to hold to Ismail's view. There was in it a relief from personal responsibility which, under the circumstances, could not but be agreeable to them.

When Crosslett recovered his senses, all was quiet around him. The band of Malhaites had gone down into the lower valley with their captives, and nothing was to be seen or heard of any of them.

Binding up his wounds as best he could, he made his way back into the main road which led to Jerusalem. The undaunted man had determined to reach the city that night, and rouse the authorities into sending a party to the rescue of Hilwe and her son.

His faith sustained him. His bruised and battered body, in its flimsy shred of garment, did not seem to avail much.

"The help of the Lord against the mighty!" he kept repeating. "It can do wonders."

He felt with intense accountability the importance of every moment, and pushed forward, in spite of his weakness, when one less indomitable would have sunk by the wayside, helpless.

Darkness had settled down on all the sea-coast and lowlands of Palestine; but a figment of daylight, like a gray burial-shroud, still hung suspended over the hill-country. It was barely enough to dimly illumine his path, and its feeble aid would soon vanish.

Suddenly, out of the ashen-gray sky burst a golden-orange radiance.

"Ah, it is the wondrous afterglow, to light me on my way!" he said.

Seven times it flamed up out of that sombre ashen-gray, and seven times died out. But before finally disappearing, it had greatly helped him on his road.

"Surely, it is a sign from heaven," he told himself, and, like Paul, "he thanked God and took courage."

But how many miles still lay between him and his goal! He had stumbled and fallen in the darkness. His weariness was beginning to tell upon him. It seemed impossible that he could much longer keep walking at the rate at which he had been going, or indeed moving at all, especially as the way had become obscured. Were all his efforts to be useless?

Notwithstanding, he had not doubted — no, not once.

"Doubts are not for me," he said.

As he lay breathless upon the highway, he heard the rumble of a carriage coming from the direction of a by-road. It was a landau, three horses abreast, driven at a furious rate. Within it was a belated traveller. They were plainly trying to make up for lost time; and when the horses shied and plunged, startled by the uncouth ghost-like figure in the road, the gentleman who occupied the carriage did not fail to express his annoyance. But this soon changed to pity, as he caught sight of the wretched exhausted object in the shape of a man who appealed to him in the excellent language of the English Bible, and explained his forlorn condition, and the urgent necessity for his reaching Jerusalem without delay.

The door of the landau was thrown open.

"Jump in, man, and don't stand there talking; I myself am in a hurry," came the rough but kindly English invitation.

To Crosslett it was the chariot of the Lord and the horsemen thereof, as he bowled over the road at such a tremendous velocity he felt as if he were flying on the wings of an angel.

Yes; according to his faith it was unto him. He was

in Jerusalem that night, and at an earlier hour than he had hoped for.

"God always goes beyond our hopes, and does better for us than we expected, if we only put our trust in him," was his quiet acknowledgment. "Had we only more faith, we could remove mountains. They say the day of pure unquestioning faith is gone, except for the ignorant and wilfully superstitious. Men now take God and his revelation in hand, and cross-examine them, referring their testimony to the class to be considered doubtful if not untrustworthy."

But Crosslett's work had scarcely more than begun. Of course all the consulates and public offices in Jerusalem had long been closed for the day. They would not be opened till the next morning at the regular hour. He had hastened to the American Consulate; but the government cavass on guard there informed him the consul had been called away on important duty, and was not expected to return before the following afternoon.

Such of the Turkish officials as he managed to penetrate to, treated him with their usual easy and polite indifference. They well knew that the matter on which he came, relating entirely to Turkish subjects, his consul would not and could not interfere in. But this they did not take the trouble, or were too courteous, to tell him. He brought no charges of the murderous assault upon himself; and had he done so, they must have gone through his consul, and be tried by the Turkish court, with its notorious procrastination.

Quick to take the measure of a man, while they had a certain tolerance and respect for what they considered Crosslett's good qualities, and especially his virtues as a hakîm who charged no fees, they regarded him as a religious erratic, flighty, and without standing or influence. His statements they could give but little weight to, and quietly relegated them to what are called "fairy tales."

Crosslett had learned that the local authorities had at the moment no force which was available for his object. The zaptiehs were away on some special duty, the time of their return depending on the completion of their

task. The matter would be duly considered and attended to, he was informed, when properly presented and authenticated, as the law required.

While engaged in this wearisome work, almost maddening from its waste of precious time, certain facts in the tragic ending of poor Amne reached Crosslett. They greatly aggravated his fears for Hilwe, the danger of whose position he perceived he had not exaggerated in the slightest degree. He was told that Count Leone Spollato, the young Italian nobleman, having returned to Jerusalem, was intent on sifting the case of Amne to the bottom, and having the murderers punished. Here was Crosslett's opportunity. He at once sought the count, and laid before him all the particulars regarding Hilwe's capture by the men of Malha.

Though now late at night, Leone had not gone to bed, but, filled with remorse, was sitting up, brooding over the horrors of the double murder, and the failure of justice under Turkish methods.

It did not take many words to inspire him as to what should be done in this new display of cruelty. The unadorned account of Crosslett, himself an evidence of the violent natures of those men of blood, set Leone on fire. He determined to make an appeal to the authorities for a band of soldiers to arrest the men and deliver Hilwe and her son. If not successful in obtaining this, he had made up his mind to venture his life in the attempt to rescue the captives. And he flattered himself he should be accompanied by such as would volunteer their aid, in sufficient numbers to insure the success of the incursion.

But the local authorities, disturbed at such an unseemly hour, and in this irregular unofficial way, for what appeared to them an entirely inadequate reason, and on the representations of one to them little better than a lunatic, were not prepared to take any such step as that desired, at a moment's notice and without the fullest investigation.

"Wait till the morrow."

"Boukra — boukra," was the decision.

"I know we are irregular in coming to you in this

way," admitted Leone. "As an Italian subject, I should have come through the consul of the King of Italy; and Mr. Crosslett, who has been murderously assaulted, through the American consul."

"Yes, yes," they eagerly assented.

"But time did not admit of this. We felt that, did you know the facts, you would see the necessity of acting promptly."

"Yes, yes. Boukra — to-morrow," was the only satisfaction he got.

Equally disappointed was Leone as to the volunteers he expected to join him. Not one offered; and when he had recourse to expostulations and bribes, the result was no better.

One man, whom he had specially assured himself of having with him, plainly gave his reasons for declining the adventure.

"This is an affair in which a man's life is exposed," he said. "It is dangerous work."

"No doubt," admitted Leone.

"Then I would advise you to have nothing to do with it. Let the government attend to it."

"If that is your advice," thundered Leone, "I have no use for it. You can keep it. I pity your cowardly nature."

The fact was that the reports of the violence and high-handed deeds of certain of the Malhaites had terrorised the people.

All this delay was maddening to Leone and Crosslett.

"We have no time to spare: we must not lose a moment," they had kept telling themselves. Notwithstanding, hours more precious than gold had been melted in the crucible of Turkish inertia.

"All this time has been wasted," exclaimed Leone. "We have thrown it away for nothing, in trying to move them. Yet am I determined to attempt the rescue, even if I have to go alone."

"I shall go with you, to the death," was the impassioned utterance of Crosslett.

"And then there is Selim," added Leone, turning to his servant. "You will go, Selim?"

"Ay," was the reply.

"Hasten and saddle me Al Borak. He is a host in himself. And see if you can procure two other horses. The day is breaking. Remember, every moment is precious."

CHAPTER LI

IT was broad daylight by the time the three horsemen passed beneath King David's Tower and through the Jaffa Gate on their errand of mercy and justice.

Leone and his horse Al Borak, now become a part of each other, were the leading spirits, and naturally took the precedence. Crosslett, a flaming soul in his rare enthusiasm, would have kept alongside, neck and neck, if not in advance; but Al Borak would not have it so. It was incompatible, not to be thought of, the proud beast felt and distinctly showed by his actions.

"What folly to imagine a scrub like that could keep pace with me!" was the sentiment of the full-blooded Arab. "Have I not the blood of the Prophet's matchless steed in my veins, — blood that has coursed through the purest and finest stallions and mares of the desert, without a muddy drop in it? Am I not named Al Borak? Do I not know my right to do great things? Do I not know what is expected of me?"

A horse does not speak in words intelligible to us: yet he can convey what he thinks and feels in a wonderful way if we only give him our attention, and especially if we are in sympathy with him. And this horse of horses, he was as a prince among men. He seemed to spring out of his skin at a touch, at a word, so great was his sensitiveness.

"My master is sad," he ruminated. "We have a heavy task laid upon us. But I shall carry him through. He is troubled. He blames himself, and says he has done wrong. But it was not much that he did. He is not bad. He only wanted to have a good time; and

the woman lured him on. Do I not know how the mares entice one? He spurred me just now with his heel. I did not take it to heart; he did it without thinking. He knows I do not need it. He loves me, and is kind to me. I only had to look back at him. It was enough. He is not proud. He condescends to inquire about the way from that conceited Syrian, Selim, and from that scarecrow Crosslett. Neither of them have ever been in the desert, where I have been, — where I was born. Ah, it is there you must know the way, where there is not a landmark to guide you; nothing but sand and sky! He need not ask the way. Do I not know where he is going? Could I not take him there? Has he not already been there with me?"

It was true that Leone, immediately after his return to Jerusalem, in thorough grief, and in repentance for his escapade with the damsel from across the sea, had searched out and visited the Black Valley, — that deep and ugly scar upon the face of the land. He had hoped to find the grave of Amne and his child; but in this he was not successful.

Once outside the city walls, and upon the road, Leone gave free rein to Al Borak. How he shot ahead, like a stone from a catapult! Crosslett and Selim began to fall behind farther than they wished.

"That horse has Shaitân in him," said the latter. "Was there ever anything like it?"

But Al Borak, who had not half let himself out, seemed to say, "Let me teach those plebeian garrans what blood can do, and show them my heels."

Yet these "garrans" did not behave so badly, at first. But they did not have the staying qualities of Al Borak, and when they left the road and came out into the rough country, they fell more and more behind.

The horse which Selim rode stumbled while going at full dash, and, failing to recover himself, came down with much force. Selim luckily escaped with a few bruises. But the horse had sprained a muscle in his left foreleg, and went so lame he was obliged to drop out.

Leone felt too seriously the importance of keeping

on his course with unabated speed, no matter who dropped out, that he scarcely looked behind, or drew rein for a moment.

He was an accomplished horseman, having been taught riding at the military school in Naples, and afterwards having served in the cavalry of the Italian army. Like most Italians, everything he did was done well and with grace.

But now he was riding under a terrible pressure of responsibility. He came as one inspired.

His knees clutched passionately the saddle and caressed the sides of the noble animal that carried him so superbly, — plunging forward with such proud spirit, and determined will, and glad desire, as though entirely a part of him, almost as much an outcome of his personality as if he had been generated of him.

The horse did wonders. Yet Leone was not satisfied. Had he had his wish, he would have flown through the air on his imperative errand. For conscience was the spur, — the hope of reparation, in some degree, where there could be no absolute reparation — no retrieval — no atonement, — the unutterably longed for.

Forward he dashed on Al Borak, — The Lightning; over hill, through valley; trampling brush and plant and creeping thing; striking fire from the spurned rocks, — sparks of electric scath and wrath from the flinty ground that throbbed and palpitated under his tread, — a man precipitating himself into the future, — annihilating time and space, so far as he could do so, — flinging himself into his purpose without thought of self, or fear of personal danger.

"Ah! Great God of Heaven and Earth! can I get there in time? Permit me to save them! Accept it as reparation!"

This was the cry that burst from his agonised heart; but on his feverish lips it sounded only as an inarticulate moan, — the desperate demand of him who seeks with tears a place for repentance.

"How easy to do wrong!" he said. "How difficult, — impossible to repair that wrong!"

Onward, onward. Could he ever go fast enough? Could he get there in time to save them? Might he not be too late? Ah, that was the terrible thought! He must not think of it. There must be no such word as "fail."

As he swung forward, he felt as if he were dashing through infinite space. Would there never be an end? Would he never reach the point?

Then, again, he imagined he was rushing to aid Amne and their little son, while something told him it was hopeless work. And ever in his brain, keeping time to the tramp of the horse's feet, rang over and over again, spurring him, maddening him, the words of the defiant love-song, slightly changed for the occasion: —

"From the desert I come to thee,
On a stallion shod with fire,
And the winds are left behind
In the speed of my desire.
Through the desolate waste I charge,
And the midnight hears my cry;
I love but thee, I love but thee,
With a love that shall not die
Till the sun grows cold,
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the Judgment
Book unfold."

But the horse, Al Borak, he was transformed.

He was like an avenging spirit, — one on whom the command of Allah is laid to execute it, and who could not choose 'twixt life or death, or aught else, but must do, in any case, even to the obliteration of death, — must do, at all odds, in the face of all cost and consequence, — in despite of Death himself.

When his master cried, "Al Borak," the horse knew what was expected of him. He must be Al Borak, — the Lightning, — the fire of God to cleave cloud and space, — to flash, to rend, to burn, — to divide the very heavens with thunderous roar.

"Hah! I am it, — the purpose itself, — the embodied vengeance of Allah! What is the ground to me? I spurn it! Am I not winged with the word that may

not be spoken, — the unutterable command that I know not but as I execute it, — the decree that is too awful to know?"

Oh, he was wild with the exalted joy of it, the majesty of it!

On, on; he tore through everything. Nothing could resist such determination. The rocks and the trees flew by, and were lost behind, — were passed in a flash, — then, at once, were in the distance.

He snuffed out and smelt from afar, as if by superhuman instinct, the place he was destined for.

"Allah! — Allah is everywhere — is everything! I am his demiurgos!"

Yes, as they advanced, man and horse, one power, the gorge opened before them, — the Black Valley. They were received within its direful depths of mysterious shadow. Was it not the Valley of the Shadow of Death?

Swiftly they came upon that hateful group, — the men of blood doggedly carrying out their evil will.

But what was their will before the will of Allah?

Al Borak was upon them in an instant, as if he had suddenly descended out of the seventh heaven among them.

There sat Hilwe, in the midst, — the grave yawning for her at her feet.

She wore the plain dark-blue garment of the country, and over it the striped red and black outer robe of camel's hair; all hand-made, woven by herself; while from her head floated the white drapery, like a veil, simple and graceful, reaching below her waist. The colours were those properly ascribed to and associated with the Blessed Virgin, and for ages worn by the peasant-women of Palestine.

There she sat, her man-child in her arms, the majesty of resignation upon her, a personification of the Madonna, — the Divine type of Motherhood for all generations, which should call her blessed. The young peasant-woman of Judæa, scarcely old enough to bear the responsibilities of motherhood, or be a mother, with her great dark eyes, black hair, and

brown complexion, richly tinted with all the glorious colouring with which the sun delights to paint, when he kisses the cheeks of those who love him, — poor Hilwe, with her first-born, her gentle son, knew not how like she was to that other Mother of Judæa, who, nearly two thousand years ago, found little reverence, or pity, or refuge in an unloving world which maligned her.

To Leone, from the land of Raphael, Angelo, and Del Sarto, it was a sight that needed no interpreter. There was the Madonna. He saw her as if in holy vision. The very drapery, — the blue, the red, the white, — all was as he had seen it pictured hundreds of times. Oh, that look of indescribable purity in her face upturned to heaven for vindication and the pity that man denied!

"Will not the sanctity of motherhood protect thee from the ruthless creatures thirsting for thy blood?"

No. They are as the rocks that surround them for obduracy. Their fanaticism stifles every natural feeling. They are implacable, lost to every gentle emotion. There is nothing to hope for from them, — no relenting. All is hard, unmitigated bigotry.

But when they saw the horse, when he broke through them like a demon of destruction, — ah! that was another thing.

No wonder that the horse seemed to them of supernal mould, — the action of him — the nostrils breathing smoke — eyes that flashed fire — the ground breaking into sparks beneath his feet!

They heard Leone call him by his name — Al Borak — as he urged him on.

"Al Borak! It is even the horse of the Prophet!" they exclaimed, and, amazed, terrified for the nonce, fell back before him.

"Hah, Al Borak, do thy duty!"

The cry came out of the depths of Leone's soul; as a man shouts in the battle when he is sore pressed, and knows not but to smite, to wound, to destroy; who is there to slay, and delays not to think, and pauses not to consider.

He yelled without words. It was the outburst of a maniac. He was wild with enthusiasm. His face had lost all definite expression, and his words articulation. His features were distorted, — frightful to look upon. All was frenzy.

He was in the midst of them. The evil ones had regained their courage. They closed upon him. They caught his bridle to prevent him in his purpose and overwhelm him. They made deadly thrusts at him, and tried to drag him from the horse.

The moment had come. Leone leaned forward and spoke softly in the horse's ear the mystic words which the Bedawe had taught Hassan, and which he in turn had conveyed to Leone. They were the words which had governed all the horse's tribe for generations.

Then the power and the vengeance of Al Borak broke loose. His mouth opened upon the evil ones. The screech he emitted was unlike the neigh of a horse; it was blood-curdling. It might be supposed to resemble the defiant scream of the night warlock. The wild breeze of the desert again blew over him, and fired his blood. He seized the first of the men by the neck, and shook him as though he had been a rat, throwing him aside, and crippling him for life. The others who stood in the way he pranced upon, and struck down with his fore-feet, in inconceivable fury. It was frightful. It was like the vengeance of God. The madness of one of the fabled centaurs was in him, and compelled him. He was possessed of the ancient sources of strength that are hidden in the immovable hills and stubborn rocks, and that have woven the knotted sinews within the timbers of the toughened oak, — the irresistible sacred force of Nature which she gives to the wild unspoiled creatures that love her and hold by her.

He now was close to Hilwe. With a low whinny of affectionate recognition he bowed his head before her; he rubbed his smooth nose against her cheek.

She knew him, yet she could not understand. It all was like a vision to her.

"I have come to deliver you!" cried Leone. "Quick!

If you would save your own life and your child's life, delay not. For the love of God, hasten!"

He held out his hand to her. He caught hold of her, drawing her to him. The horse, at a word, bent low to receive her, as he had been taught. She placed her foot on Leone's foot, and with little effort the young man swung her up upon the horse, behind him.

Then, like a flash of the livid leven for which he had been named, that noble creature shot forward through that dusky crowd, plunging upon them, throwing them down, trampling them under foot.

Filled with dread, they gave way. In an instant he had flashed through them, and was gone.

Hilwe, clasping her child to her, clung to Leone. As he felt her arm around his waist, it gave him fresh courage.

"Forward, Al Borak! Brave, brave one!"

But those determined fellaheen were full of resources, and were not to be baffled of their prey, or circumvented without a further struggle.

One rushed to where he had left his rifle.

"What are you about? Will you let them go, nor put forth a hand to stay them?" he cried.

A ball whizzed close to Leone. Missing him, as he thought, it grazed Al Borak's glossy shoulder, and left a streak of blood on the white velvet of his skin.

But there was no pause. If possible, the horse went all the swifter, — more furiously tore ahead, leaving the accursed Black Valley behind.

"Grip fast!" Leone cried to Hilwe, not knowing that, in thus encouraging her, he spoke the words that in great emergency the gallant Leslie had used to the Queen of Scotland.

On they fled, till Al Borak's steaming flanks admonished Leone to draw rein, which he did, in mercy to the faithful horse, who would have dropped dead before halting without the command.

They were saved.

They were well beyond pursuit of their enemies, even if those enemies had the least prospect of success in pursuing them.

Hilwe clasped her child to her and kissed him. Snatched out of the very jaws of death, under the revulsion of her feelings, she could not speak, — no, not even to thank Leone. Doubtless, too, she felt that thanks were paltry rendering for such service as he had bestowed.

Crosslett was not without having taken part in the action; but it was in such a subordinate *rôle* he felt rather humiliated and ashamed of it.

At the critical moment, when Leone had lifted Hilwe and her son behind him, and Al Borak was trampling down and flinging to the right and left those men of sin who were attacking them, Crosslett appeared upon the scene. He came with the old Hebrew war-cry: "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" The wind, aided by the velocity with which he rode, had stripped from him, and lifted high above his shoulders and his head, the light and scanty piece of drapery which was his only garment. Remaining fastened at his neck, it waved and flapped over him like wings, giving him, mounted as he was, an extraordinary appearance, and perhaps an additional likeness to one of the classic heroes, mediæval champions, or ancient saints, — or all of them rolled into one.

Filled with the divine afflatus and heavenly ecstasy, like the St. George they had nicknamed him, or an avenging St. Michael, he was utterly unconscious of the figure he presented, or of anything strange or improper in his person.

"Fly, Crosslett, fly, or they will take you!" was all that Leone, as he carried off Hilwe, had time or thought to call to him.

Crosslett's sudden arrival and supernatural aspect had, doubtless, in some degree, contributed to the result, and intensified the superstitious fears of the men of Malha, diverting their attention. His appalling shout gave the impression that other help was coming, and that it was near at hand. When the sharp report of the rifle rang out, speeding the ball that left a red furrow in the beautiful skin of Al Borak,

Crosslett drew from the holster a revolver that Selim had placed there, and fired off in rapid succession every cartridge it contained, shouting: "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered!"

In the confined gorge it sounded like a volley of musketry, and the effect was salutary on the wild men.

"I fire it to scare, not to wound," said Crosslett, whose principles were opposed to the use of a deadly weapon.

Selim had forced the revolver upon him; while Crosslett reminded him that the count had insisted that, under the circumstances, there must be no blood-shed unless compelled by the most extreme provocation.

"Then fire it to frighten, not to kill," said Selim, thrusting the weapon in the holster.

And this was the sentiment with which "St. George" excused himself.

"Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered!" was his parting shout.

Then the brave unselfish thought entered his mind to mislead the fellaheen by not following the count, but returning another way. He succeeded in confusing them sufficiently to draw them into pursuing him, and was shot at by them, two or three times. But this he was too modest to mention.

CHAPTER LII

SPEEDING through the numerous passes and glens which lie beyond the Black Valley, sights not unfamiliar to Hilwe, though obscured by the wild rush of their flight, flashed occasionally upon her bewildered gaze. She scarcely noticed them. Her mind was dulled from the shock she had received. But now, when Leone halted, she recognised the place — she knew it well. It was near a part of the Wady-el-Werd.

They were in one of those ancient and neglected roadways, so common in Palestine, almost obliterated in

places by the winter rains, and by masses of rock which had rolled down into its rough bed, and sometimes blocked the way.

Near by was an old and originally finely-ornamented fountain. The water, at this time in considerably reduced volume, gushed out of the side of the terrace-like plateau, high above the valley, and close to the roadway, escaping through the shattered pillars and curiously carved stonework of the fountain, which was overhung and shadowed by fig-trees and other trees, adding to the picturesqueness of the place.

In front, standing on end, upright, two great circular stones, the remains of an archaic oil-press, were partly sunk in the ground, surrounded with rubbish, and somewhat overgrown with vegetation. A rude stone trough for the oil lay beside the oil-press. They appear not to have been used for generations, and probably belong to a time when the neighbouring hills, still terraced to their summits, were covered with vines and olives.

Hilwe gave an exclamation of recognition:

"Ah, it is Ain Hanîyeh!"

It was the Fountain of St. Philip — the place where he had baptised the eunuch, the Treasurer of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians.

The water still flows on, though the surroundings, doubtless, are changed since that day of grace, so many hundred years ago, when Philip rode with the eagerly inquiring eunuch in his chariot, reading and explaining Esaias the prophet, as told so well in the fascinating old narrative:

"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?'

"And Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.'"

How many a summer and winter have passed between that day and this! Nations have arisen and fallen; continents have been discovered and brought into the marvellous light out of the misty unknown in which so long they had slumbered, — though always known to God; sixty generations of men have come and gone,

and turned to dust, since then; — and still with silvery voice the water calleth out of the rocky hillside to the glen, pouring out and spilling itself in a sacred libation — a baptismal fountain of cleansing and of cheer.

Hilwe, seeing the water, prepared to alight, — Leone, who had already dismounted, assisting her.

Gladly did they drink of the refreshing stream, that sang for them a song of thanksgiving while they and Al Borak satisfied their thirst from it.

Leone carefully bathed Al Borak's wound, washing the blood-stains from him. That crimson streak the ball had left was scarcely skin deep.

For the first time, Leone perceived the shot had come closer to himself than he had suspected. It had slit his trousers across the thigh, leaving a welt upon the flesh, but barely drawing the blood. He now remembered he had felt at the time a stinging sensation there, as though he had received the lash of a whip.

He took care to conceal it from Hilwe.

"It was closer work than I thought for both of us, Al Borak," he said, addressing the horse. "Brave, noble Al Borak, we owe our lives and everything to you. You deserve all the praise."

They had rested but a little while in the shadow of the trees and fountain, when Leone, turning to Hilwe, suggested that it might be well to proceed on their journey.

"You and your little Talmai can rest more safely in Jerusalem," he said, "where you can be protected."

Then Hilwe arose and bowed herself before him.

"Thou hast saved my life, and the life of my child," she said, "and what can such an one as I am render unto my lord for all the benefits he has done unto me? Nothing that I could say or do would avail to show my gratitude. Yet now, if I have found grace in thy sight, suffer me to depart. Hinder me not, I beseech thee. Let me go upon my way, and do thou return unto Jerusalem; and the blessing of heaven be upon thee. Who am I that I should trouble thee, or bring reproach upon thy name?"

"Hilwe, I perceive you distrust me."

"Nay; that be far from me to impute evil to thee. Hast thou not risked thy life to deliver us? Yet suffer it to be as I have said unto thee."

A pained expression shadowed Leone's face.

"It is because of Amne," he said. "You have no confidence in me because of her. And yet I meant no evil to Amne. I loved her. I would have given my life to save her and the little child — my beautiful child. I have been unfortunate."

Hilwe but imperfectly understood the words; yet she knew by intuition the meaning.

"Poor Amne," she said. "They did unto her as they would have done to me; and there was none to plead her cause — there was none to deliver her."

"Hilwe, you know not what you are exposing yourself to. It is far better that I should take you to Jerusalem. I swear to you I shall take you whithersoever you wish — to any of the convents of religious women, or to the house of the good Deaconesses of the English Church, or to any Moslem family you prefer."

Partly by signs, partly by words, he tried to convey his meaning.

"Nay, nay."

Hilwe shook her head.

"But you have no food. I have no money with me, or I would gladly give you. I left in such haste I did not bring my purse. What will become of you?"

"Fear not for me," she replied. "I know the country. Those who would harm me will look for me in Jerusalem; and I shall make my escape to a place of safety, where they will not think of searching for me. Go thy way; peace be with thee; and the blessing of the helpless, whom thou didst succour, be upon thee."

Leone would have further remonstrated with her; but, repeating her thanks, she bade him good-bye, and at once departed with her little one.

It was done so suddenly, he scarcely understood what had occurred till too late to prevent it. While he was occupied, a few minutes, with Al Borak, she watched her opportunity, and when he turned to look after her, she had disappeared.

Recovering himself, he followed her, intending to help her on her way, if not see her to some place of safety.

"I did wrong to let her go," he said reproachfully. "She will get into trouble. Yet how can I blame her for leaving?"

Leading Al Borak between the huge masses of rock which cumbered the difficult roadway, he searched for Hilwe on every side, but could see nothing of her. She had cleverly evaded him. As though she had been a partridge, or quail, or other wild bird, she had run under bushes and boulders, and hidden from him so completely, it was impossible for him to find her, or know what direction she had taken.

At last, bitterly censuring himself for letting her go alone, he was obliged to give up the search, and returned by way of the fountain.

He determined that as soon as he reached Jerusalem he would lay the entire matter before the authorities, and demand that the most severe measures should be adopted for the punishment of the wicked Malhaites.

He hardly dared let himself think of the cruel end of Amne and his child. When he thought of it all and his transgressions, an inexpressible pang passed through him, forcing a long deep groan from his lips, as though it would shatter his very body and soul.

The passionate regret for that which is irreparable, for the opportunity that comes not again, the joy that can never return, — who can measure its bitterness and pain? The heart grows weak before it. It seems like the forerunner of death and eternal retribution.

Yet to have saved Hilwe and the little Talmai was perhaps some slight atonement.

It was with a sad remorseful spirit he drew the bridle over his arm and led the horse through the more narrow passages. But where there was more room, he walked beside Al Borak; and once more, before mounting, he threw his arm around the horse's neck and spoke cheering and fond words to him, while the sagacious animal, understanding, returned the caresses, rubbing his nose softly against Leone's arm, with a gentle whinny, as if trying to speak.

"Brave Al Borak! How can I do enough for you? How noble and kind and wise you are! And yet they say you have no soul."

Leone threw himself into the saddle, and the horse soon brought him to a by-path which crossed the ridge into the highway leading to the city. It was the road between Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. There the powerful stallion, in the exuberance of his strength and joy, stretched his perfect limbs over the smooth track with such freshness, ease, and fleetness, it was difficult to believe he had gone through the severe work he that day had accomplished. It was as if he wanted to show what was in him, and that he was far from having exhausted his resources.

CHAPTER LIII

THE sun had just set, and the moon, now at the full, had not yet risen high enough to be visible above the rocky crests of the hills forming the heights of Bettîr, and which, in their singularly fine shapes, aided by the solemn hour, assumed in places an aspect almost of grandeur as well as of beauty.

The road winds beneath the cliffs, which shut out all view of the village from this direction. It was here Hilwe found herself at the close of the day which had been so eventful to her. Weary as she was, she did not turn aside to take the way that led up to the village, but kept right on, and then ascended the connected tell at the extreme end of the valley, whose summit rises but slightly above the rest of the range, yet commands a view of the entire surroundings, including that distant sweep of the Mediterranean, now a streak of misty blue, it having lost its crispy freshness and sunny sparkle of the morning.

As she passed beneath the aqueduct that high above her head spanned the road, she found a tank of water,

but only waited long enough to quench her own and her child's thirst, then hurried on.

She seemed to have no definite plan, only to avoid those who might prove inimical to her, and to find for the present a quiet place to rest in. Perhaps she intended, when it was a little later and had grown dusk, to come down and beg a morsel of food from some outlying house, where she would not be recognised. But her mind did not seem to be very clear on the subject.

The one longing remained, — that she might get as near as safety permitted to Kadra, that she might have one sympathetic breast into which she could pour her sorrows.

Near that point which rises a little higher than the rest of the range is a grove which formerly had been more extensive, and is not wanting in certain distinctive marks of antiquity. The olive-trees composing it are very old, many of them being so hollow the trunks are mere shells, the centres being built up with stone masonry to preserve the trees, which, notwithstanding their venerable age, are still flourishing and fruitful.

Groups of the trees, containing four or five individuals, might occasionally be seen within a radius of from five to ten or more feet. This indicates the position and size of a single original olive-tree which, from great age, having decayed at the centre, had left certain points of vitality in its outer rim that had each grown into a distinct tree.

Here, into this peaceful spot, Hilwe entered, and rested beneath the trees.

The point, doubtless, is one of the "high places" where the worship of the ancient gods, Ba'al, Ashtaroth, and others, had been carried on by the original inhabitants of the land, from whom the Israelites had learned to practise the idolatry which had such fascination for them it drew them from the worship of Jehovah.

The moon was now shining resplendent, and from this vantage-ground was seen in all her beauty. The ruddy gleams of the sunset were fading out in the west, and the cold silvery moonlight was succeeding. The pale light made fantastic shadows under the ancient trees, and one

might easily imagine the effect produced by such a scene upon the credulous and superstitious people who came here to worship in the days of Joshua and Ahab.

It was impossible that Hilwe should not feel intensely the peculiar influence of the place. The deep seclusion of the grove and the sense of peace and of repose the moonlight almost always brings were to her like a benediction. The walking of God in the Garden of Eden, in the cool of the day, has a sweet significance that we all must acknowledge. The day's labour done, poor man has this respite from his toil, and can commune with his Creator. It was something of this she felt. It was the atmosphere of the place.

At first she supposed herself entirely alone with Talmai, and felt the relief that the sensation brought her. But soon she became aware of the presence of a stranger.

Not far from where she sat, she saw the figure of a man move across the shaft of moonlight that penetrated through the vista formed by a double row of olive-trees. At the nearer end was a large block of stone, before which the man stood. He had poured out something upon the top of the stone after having prostrated himself, and now as he stood with outstretched arms, she heard the murmur of a prayer or invocation. She saw not the man's face. It was turned towards the moon. But she caught sight of his snow-white beard, and knew he was not a young man.

The scene which was enacted before her was not one to cause her any great surprise. The custom of offering on some high place at the full of the moon a sacrifice in the shape of oil poured out on an altar-like stone, hollowed at the centre, is still adhered to by the fellaheen of Palestine. It, doubtless, is a remnant of the ancient worship of Ashtaroth, which, as they are Mohammedans, and detest anything like idolatry, is the more remarkable. When questioned about it, they simply say it is an old custom, and was done by their forefathers to bring favourable crops and prosperity.

The sanctity of high places seems to have been a settled belief in the remote ages. The early books of the Bible have frequent reference to high places as places of

worship. Groves upon lofty summits were selected for the worship of Ba'al and other gods of the Canaanites. The grove and the mountain meant seclusion and security. Even Christ himself seems to have sympathised with this feeling. We find him going up into a mountain and continuing all night in prayer. On the snowy dome of Hermon he was transfigured with great glory. It was from a mountain-top he delivered his divine commandments, as Moses in the past had brought down the law from Mount Sinai. The people felt it was getting nearer to heaven and the God of heaven when they selected the hill and the tell as places of worship.

As the man again prostrated himself, and then retired, Hilwe cautiously advanced to the altar. It was a huge single block, roughly cubical in form, of unhewn stone; no tool of man had worked upon it. It had alone been carved by the hand of Nature. Even the hollow on the top had been made by the frequent dropping of the rain.

She found there the corn, the wine, and the oil which the man had poured out as an offering. Being an hungered, she gladly took of the corn or parched wheat, a handful or so, and did eat of it, sharing it with Talmai.

But the man, who had gone but a little way, perceived her, and returned.

"Who art thou? and whence comest thou?" he asked in severe tones.

Then Hilwe, trembling, cast herself upon her face before him, and kissed the hem of his garment.

She now perceived that the old man was Abou Chalîl, the sheik of Bettîr.

Seeing she answered not, he again questioned her:

"Who art thou? And whose is the child? And why didst thou take of the offering from the altar? That may not be done, saving thou art in sore distress."

Then did Hilwe answer him, in a lamentable voice:

"Have mercy upon me, my lord, if I have done that which I ought not to have done. I and my little one are indeed in sore distress and an hungered. I am of the people of Malha. Be not wroth with me because of it. My own people seek my life this day. They would have destroyed me and my child had we not been delivered

out of their hand. As to my name — I am called Hilwe. Alas, the name doth mock me, for my life hath not been sweet, but very bitter. And the lad thou seest is Talmai, the son of a man of Bettîr — even Hassan, whom they have taken into the army, and sent into a far country, across the sea. And now he is reported slain in battle. Woe is me. Why should I care to live were it not for the lad?"

She lifted up her voice and wept as one who mourns for the dead.

The sheik was greatly troubled at her words and her lamentation.

"Arise, my daughter," he said. "Thou hast been kinder than I have been. God forgive me, and do thou forgive me for speaking so harshly to one whom he hath afflicted. I might have broken thy heart. As for the rumour thou didst hear, pray God it may not be true. We have heard no such tidings. Would we not have heard them? Is not my son, even Chalîl, with thy husband?"

How sweet the word "husband" sounded in Hilwe's ears, though now it was chastened by her sorrow. It was the first time the word had been addressed to her, when he whom it named was gone, and her heart beat fast.

"I am as one who hath been lost," she said. "I have been wandering these many days, and am full of trouble. I am as one distraught, seeking rest and finding none."

"Fear not, my daughter. Let not thy heart faint within thee. Here shalt thou and thy son find rest. Have I not vowed a vow and sworn to Hassan, for myself and my posterity, to keep in remembrance my covenant with him and with his seed, even for generations? Though there was a time I valued him not at his true worth. Allah forgive me. Nor shall I see even a dog belonging to him want for aught that I and mine can give him. How much more, therefore, shall I be good unto his son?"

The sheik took Talmai in his arms and kissed him.

"Blessed be thy father's son," he said. "It was well to name him Talmai. It is a name honoured among us."

"It was Hassan's wish," said Hilwe. "He said it was his father's and his father's father's name."

"Thou speakest the words of truth. The name hath been preserved among us for countless generations."

Giving the child back to his mother, the sheik continued:

"And now, my daughter, hearken unto my voice, that it may be well with thee and with thine. The night cometh on. Thou shalt abide with my daughters in my own house this night, and as long after as thou inclinest thereto. But is not Hassan's house, which was his father's before him, ready to thy hand? Why shouldst thou not have it? It shall be given to his son and to thee on the morrow. Also I shall apportion his share in the land to thee and thine. It shall be for thy sustenance. And fear not that the people of Bettîr will lift a finger against thee to do evil to thee, because of the Thar, and that thou art from Malha. They will protect thee, and do good to thee all the days of thy life, for the love they bear to Hassan."

Hilwe bowed herself before the sheik and did obeisance.

"I will do all things as thou sayest. And blessed be thou, and praise be to the God of our fathers, who hath lifted me up when I was cast down, and this day brought me help and strength against the mighty."

"It is time we were returning," said the sheik. "Thou and the lad need food and refreshment. Follow me, and I shall lead thee by a short and easy way to the village. It is but a few steps."

When, the next day, it was noised abroad throughout Bettîr that Hilwe and Talmai the son of Hassan had come to reside among them, and that the sheik had given them the house of Hassan to live in, and apportioned the share of his tillage to be theirs, nothing could exceed the enthusiasm and delight of the people. The example of the sheik was enough to stimulate them. They vied with one another in showing kindness to the strangers.

Hilwe had found the house just as Hassan and Chalîl had left it when they were taken by the zaptiehs. It was more than sufficient for the simple wants of herself and her child. She took a great though melancholy pleasure

in living in it and in looking at and touching the various things that it contained which Hassan had owned and handled.

The day she had entered it there was, from morning till evening, a stream of the women of Bettîr, coming to congratulate her, and each bore a gift, greater or smaller, according as she could afford. So that soon the house was stocked with provisions, enough to last for many a day.

When she thanked them and would have remonstrated, they would not listen to her.

"It is as nothing," they insisted, "to what Hassan hath done for us. Did he not even sell his horse, descended of the Prophet's horse, to save us from the oppressors? We but give thee back a tithe of what he gave us."

So she was obliged to let them have their way.

"You are better to me than if you were my own people," she told them.

"Why should it not be so?" they replied. "Art thou not now belonging to us?"

Thus Hilwe abode in the old stone house with Talmai, as if she were Hassan's widow. The days passed uneventfully and peacefully. And though more than one of the young men of Bettîr looked longingly upon her, and would gladly have taken her to wife, insisting that Hassan was dead, she gave them no encouragement.

Then they spoke to the sheik about it, and said:

"Surely Hassan cannot be alive or we should have had a message from him."

But the old man shook his head and replied:

"Nay, nay. You believe according to your desire. Mere wishing doth not bring the harvest to the threshing-floor. We will hope the best for Hassan. Evil tidings travel fast. Are there not ravens enough to carry them? Were he dead, we should have heard. Let the woman alone with her grief. Trouble her not."

So the young men had to be content, and went away sorrowful.

Hilwe remained faithful to the memory of Hassan, and treasured in her heart all his sayings. As often

as she went to draw water, she recalled his words when praising Bettîr.

"It is just as Hassan told me," she would repeat. "Did he not say to me when first I knew him: 'There is plenty of water at Bettîr. Thou hast not to go far to draw it.' Ah, had I but his smile to cheer me, I should be content and happy!"

Once, to relieve her mind, she had confessed to the sheik part of the story of her connection with the death of Kiamil Aga.

But the sheik quickly informed her she was giving herself unnecessary pain in her remorse on the subject, as the captain of zaptiehs had not been killed, but was living.

"He hath been a curse and a scourge to us!" exclaimed the sheik. "It is a pity thou didst not succeed in crushing the life out of him, as he richly deserved."

But Hilwe greatly rejoiced that the aga had escaped, and that, though he would carry the mark of his punishment upon him the rest of his days, she had not taken his life, and the stain of his blood was not upon her.

"When the zaptiehs visit us, thou hadst best conceal thyself, lest they see thee," advised the sheik. "For, though he gives a different account of the injury to him, did he find thee, the aga would not fail to trouble thee, and take revenge of that thou hast done."

CHAPTER LIV

THE insurrection in Crete was slowly subsiding. At last the continued presence of the Turkish troops was making itself felt in the revival of the authority of the government. And now that this had been brought about, there was a certain outward acquiescence in it which might have deceived the less astute observer into imagining it the true spirit of obedience, and the restoration of law and order.

People had begun to say that had it not been for the Sphakiots the trouble would have been over long ago; and soon ended with saying that but for the Sphakiots there would never have been any trouble.

In case of failure there always must be a scapegoat.

The powers that be, even though infirm, rickety and disabled, as long as they can keep up the mask, and go through the prescribed formulæ of governing within tolerably decent limits, carry with them a certain prerogative and vested rights which are usually accepted by the majority.

The Sphakiots, those brave mountaineers, though far from being conquered, had been driven into their more remote fastnesses, where, tired of fighting, and having temporarily exhausted their resources, it was said they were willing to rest for the present.

The last conflicts with them had been sharply contested. In one of these they had drawn the Palestine soldiers into an ambush which had resulted in great loss of life. It was the part of the regiment to which Hassan, Chalîl and Murad belonged.

The Turkish officer in command, contrary to the warning of Hassan, had followed up too confidently the retreating Sphakiots, and was one of the first killed in the slaughter that ensued.

It was openly acknowledged that, but for the coolness and bravery displayed by Hassan at the critical moment, the entire troop would have been cut to pieces.

Murad, the easy-going, pleasure-loving Murad, whose chief object in life was to get all the sensual gratification he could extract from it, and knew no better — he, the warm-hearted son of Mars, was desperately wounded, and would have been left upon the field, in the enemy's hands, had not Hassan, at the risk of his own life, under a deadly fire, in which he was twice struck, carried him off on his shoulders, to a place of safety.

It was an instance of such brilliant action and unusual valour in the field, that it could not be overlooked. Hassan received a decoration, the medal for bravery in battle, and a further promotion.

Though his wounds were painful, they were not dangerous.

With Murad the case was serious. The full-blooded body, made for pleasure, accustomed to be gratified, and to be pandered to by its inhabitant, had now to take a very different medicine. It was drenched with pain. His wounds, dangerous to begin with, under the treatment of incompetent surgeons brought him to death's door.

He had been given up to die; and as he lay pale and reduced to the last degree, under the gnawings of remorse he sent for Hassan — the man who had done so much for him.

"Thou hast snatched me from the jaws of death, though all for naught. I would confess the wrong I have done thee before I die."

He spoke with difficulty; but, with the desperation of one in extremity, he told the story. The presence of Hassan, whom now he really loved, revived him; and as he went on he gathered strength. He drew forth the little amulet of pearl, which had caused so much trouble, and gave it to Hassan.

"I found it after thou didst leave, that day of our quarrel. When thou didst dash it from thee, it rebounded, and lodged in a cobweb, in a corner of the room, whence I took it; and I have since preserved it, seeing there was some mystery about it. There was no truth in a single word I told thee of my intrigue connected with it. I never had it of any damsel — much less her of whom I boasted."

Hassan had listened patiently; but now — his face almost as pale as Murad's — he blurted out, through compressed lips, an expression of mingled sorrow and contempt.

"Thine intentions, doubtless, are good, Murad. But there is no use in deceiving me. The cadi doth not hear denial after confession."

"I am not deceiving thee!" cried Murad, in despair. "Wilt thou not believe a dying man? Let me swear to thee!"

"There, there! Do not excite thyself. It is too late."

Hassan shook his head sorrowfully.

"It is not too late! By heavens I will make thee understand and believe me!"

"Ah! Didst thou not describe her particularly, and give me her name?"

Murad, seizing the amulet, pointed out the name "Hilwe," now nearly obliterated.

"It was there I found the name. It was plainer when first I got the pearl disc, but now is almost worn away. When thou didst ask me the damsel's name, the word leaped to my lips, and I spoke it, not knowing the mischief I was doing. And afterwards, when I perceived a mystery and a grief lay behind it all that I could not fathom, my pride would not let me confess. Was I not ever given to boast of my amours? Did I not tell thee of a score of them? Why should this one affect thee more than another — this one that never occurred, that was all a lie? It was thus I argued. And in my obstinacy, I could not bring myself to show thee how it was."

Hassan seemed beyond moving — as if it was now impossible for him to change the belief into which he had hardened. It was pathetic to hear him murmur to himself:

"I tried to forget her; but I could not. I should have had to tear out my heart for that. With all, in spite of all, I loved her. As much as at the first — yea, a thousand times more! I was ashamed of myself because of it."

So spoke Hassan, in agony of spirit — in brokenness of heart.

But Murad, seeing he remained unconvinced, cried out: "Do they not load a camel even while he grumbles? So, in spite of thee, I will make thee believe!"

He raised himself in the bed, and, placing his hand upon his head, swore by Mohammed — the solemn and terrible oath, so reverenced by all Moslems, and especially by the fellaheen.

"I did not think thou wast so obdurate," he said, "and that thou wouldst have driven me to it to persuade thee. Wilt thou not now believe?"

"Yea, yea. I must believe thee," said Hassan, as if he were waking out of a trance. "Yet didst thou not describe her to me accurately?"

"The description I took out of thine own mouth. Did I not cunningly draw from thee, each time, in thy questioning of me, the image of her person — she whom I had never set eyes on — and then I gave back to thee that thou hadst already told me. Yet did I not mean any wrong, or to do thee the least hurt. I saw thou wast interested in my romance, and I was led on to add more and more, to please myself and thee with the recital of my supposed love-affair."

"And the little boss — the amulet made of nacre — how did it come into thy possession?" Hassan's head dropped on his bosom, while he added in a low voice: "I carved it for her, before her very eyes. My heart went into it. I gave it to her as a talisman and a love-token. How happy I was, that day! I was too happy."

At that, Murad clapped his hands, and the soldier who waited on him entered.

"Send hither Nagi," he said. "He promised to be here before this time."

Nagi had already arrived, and was at once ushered in. He proved to be the soldier to whom Hilwe had given the amulet and message for Hassan, which were never conveyed to him; and he told, in his plain rude fashion, the incidents connected with the trinket, and how, after failing in his attempts to deliver it, he had lost it to Murad in gambling.

Nagi, too, willingly made oath, confirming his statements.

"Take the amulet; it is surely thine," said Murad, handing the carving of star-like asphodel to Hassan. "Nagi, thou hast been a tardy messenger."

"True," said Nagi disconsolately; "I have been the cause of much trouble."

The chain of evidence was complete. Hassan was convinced of the truth of their narration, and so expressed himself, — in the indignation of his soul, only refraining from outspoken censure and condemnation

of both the men on account of Murad's critical state and the unmeasured contrition they expressed for what they had done.

"I now shall die contented," said Murad, "since thou hast forgiven me, and since I have done all in my power to repair the evil I unwittingly was the cause of."

"Thou wilt not die," replied Hassan. "Have I not brought thee some dittany, fresh from Mount Ida? I would rather have it than all the drugs and nostrums of thy hakîm."

Whether it was the effect of the ancient classic vulnerary, or his respite from the treatment of the stupid and ignorant surgeon, or the relief to his mind afforded by his confession to Hassan, or the result of all these combined, certain it was that Murad soon began to show signs of improvement, which continued, with slight relapses due to his own indiscretions, till he slowly recovered.

Every one said it was next to a miracle. The natives ascribed his cure to the virtues of the dittany; and Virgil was quoted afresh, and his mention of the wounded wild goats having recourse to the plant was repeatedly dilated on.

But the gay Murad was not cured of his self-indulgent life or his gasconading ways.

In after years, referring to this severe experience, he was fond of slapping his thigh and boasting, "I am none the worse for it. I am as sound as ever. I am better than ever!"

And so he appeared to be, from his standpoint.

At times, when under the weather and a fit of remorse seized him, he would admit he was not reposing on a bed of roses, and confess that he had not done right. But he would wind up with saying, "Where is the person who has not dirtied his garment? Where will you find a man free from sin?" In which there was no one to contradict him.

One, indeed, was not satisfied with silent acquiescence, but added, "Yes, they are all alike; whether brought up on the wild Judæan hills, the snow-clad plains of Russia, in the South Sea islands, or amid the artificial life of

the most cultured city in the world, man has at bottom the same nature, the same proclivities, and they will come to the surface, and crop out, sooner or later, some time or other, as sure as he lives."

But long before Murad's complete restoration, the report had spread that the wounded who were able to be moved would be sent home. Then followed rumours that at least one if not both of the Palestine regiments were to accompany the wounded.

The reduction of the insurrection had been a costly matter, more than the depleted condition of the Turkish treasury could very well sustain without complaint. True, most of the debt could be raised by increased taxation, farmed out through the extortionate pashas and kaimakams. But that would take more or less time; and there were pressing wants which must be met without delay. There was an evident anxiety to reduce expenses as much as possible; and, in the present condition of Crete, there seemed no necessity for retaining any longer more than the usual force in the island.

CHAPTER LV

WHEN the news that the regiments were returning from Crete reached Palestine, unbounded was the agitation. The hill-country had been so largely drawn on in the formation of the regiments, that there naturally the feeling was at its highest. All sorts of rumours were in circulation long before the day on which the soldiers were expected to arrive in Jerusalem, where the regiments were to be disbanded.

It was not to be all rejoicing. Alas, no! Many who had gone out would never return. They filled unknown graves in that far-off country, — direfully far-off to the poor fellaheen. Have they not passed the dread interrogation of the black and terrible angels, Monker and Nakû, and can never be recalled? Others would come

back, but not they. Some would return wounded and disabled. A few of the younger men would be restored to the bosoms of their families, to express it in the words of Murad, "as sound as ever, or better than ever."

"They are coming, Hilwe, — I know they are coming," said the old sheik. "Chalîl and Hassan will soon be here."

"God grant it," said Hilwe. "I dreamt of Hassan last night. I could see him very clearly. How big and stalwart he looked. But he seemed different; and when I drew near to him, and he spoke sweet words to me, it was as though I could n't touch him. I dread to think what it might mean. I try to hope that all shall yet be well. For I cannot believe that love such as ours should be blotted out and be forever lost."

"Yea, and after all thou hast endured. Thou art right, my daughter. Allah will not forget thee, but will recompense thee fourfold."

Thus they rambled on, in their simple peasant talk sometimes speaking the wisdom that God gives to the suckling.

So far as mere speech is concerned, these people, as we have seen and said, are a good deal like children. But speech, even with cultured people, is rarely a measure of thought; and who can tell what thoughts are stirring in the mind of a child — or of a peasant?

In the unlettered fellah of Palestine one does not expect to find a Platonic philosopher, or to hear from him philological deductions, or discussions of the differential calculus, or discourses on Greek particles. Yet, doubtless, all this is in him, in embryo, as the child contains all the elements of the man, or the acorn incloses the oak of a thousand years. The possibility of it all is in the most uncouth peasant; though we would as soon expect a dog to quote Horace as to find the village fellah do so.

But when the day came on which it was known the regiments should arrive at Jerusalem, what language can describe the intense feeling of the people! They went wild with excitement. All Jerusalem, as well as the country round about, beyond Hebron, Lifta, Bettîr and

Malha, was stirred to its very depths. Men, women and children swarmed out on all the roads and approaches to meet their soldiers.

"O God be merciful to us!" was the cry of many an anxious soul, hoping for the best — not daring to prepare for the worst.

What swelling hearts! what longing anticipations on both sides, some doomed to be sorely disappointed!

A cloud of dust first announced the banished ones. Then came the droning minor of the Turkish music. It set the people on fire. They could scarcely contain themselves.

Onward came the troops, marching steadily, bravely, looking neither to the right nor the left; banners flying, officers, some on horseback, some on foot, giving orders; the words of command so promptly obeyed, ringing out above the martial strains of pipe, bugle, and drum.

They had passed the last watch-tower on the Jaffa road, and were coming swiftly down the hill, in the midst of the crowds that lined the way.

"God the most merciful be kind to us," repeated Hilwe, like many another in that motley multitude; and the boy Talmai clung the closer to her as he saw the agony in her face.

"Dost thou not see him?" asked the boy.

"Nay. Not yet," was the sorrowful reply.

She held her peace for a little while. There was a strained wild look in her eyes as she searched each advancing column, and saw not him whom she sought.

"Yet he must be there," she said. "He must be there; or what will become of thee and me?"

Talmai dragged at her skirts; but she noticed him not. Her eyes carried her soul in them.

Suddenly they sent out a flood of light. She gave a short gasp.

"I see him!" she said, beneath her breath.

Then came a strange look in her face. Was it a mingling of pride and fear?

It was surely Hassan she saw; but how exalted and mighty he had become! He was an officer! How far off he was from her!

The expression of her face was now almost one of terror.

"O Allah be good to me!"

As the last soldier passed inside the battlemented walls of Jerusalem, through the ancient Jaffa Gate, there was a deafening shout, and a tremendous rush of the people to follow them. How sternly the tower-like gateway frowned with its battlements and machicolations for pouring down boiling pitch, molten lead, or other offensive missiles upon the heads of assailants, looking as if it still might be capable of mischief. Hilwe and Talmai were among the struggling mass that pushed in, and could scarcely keep their feet in the surging of the crowd.

"Thou wilt get trampled under foot!" a policeman called to her.

But she heeded not — she heard not.

She was murmuring in a low voice to herself many an incoherent utterance, as if demented, and hardly conscious of what she said.

"Yes, he is here, he is here!" were her more frequent words. "And Chalîl is here too," she would add, remembering the aged sheik, and all it meant to him. "Praise be to Allah!"

The crowd pressed forward to the entrance of the barracks. The square was filled.

Presently many of the officers and the men came out of the barracks, on various duties; and some of them walked about, in front of the Tower of David, mingling with the people. Hassan was among them.

Hilwe saw him. She did not dare go near him, but kept very still, and apart.

She soon perceived he was looking around, as if seeking some one.

The next moment he was walking towards her. With what haughty masterful strides he came — stepping like a general! He stood before her.

As she beheld this grand stately man in his officer's uniform, as magnificent as the proudest Osmanli, and of mightier build than any of them, she recalled her dream, and her courage failed her.

It did not seem to her right that she should love a man such as this one. How was she to mate with this glorious being, this proud and distinguished hero, this man of arms and of valour, exalted on high, clothed in such fine raiment, ornamented with gold lace, and decorated with medals of honour?

No wonder if a little distant feeling — a touch of strangeness should lie between them. The glad stream of love had not yet leaped the barriers which their separation had erected — had not yet made its way back to the old and pleasant courses where, aforetime, swiftly and joyously, it had gone singing, and found comfort and happiness.

Yet under the glittering trappings and martial equipment was the same Hassan. Beneath the proud panoply, the great heart of the peasant and shepherd of the hill-country beat warmly for her, and for her only.

"And all this time, while I have been away from thee, how hast thou fared, Hilwe?"

Hassan spoke with the simplicity of the fellah. But how strange and hollow and different his voice sounded!

"Ah, were it not for the goodness of the noble sheik, Abou Chalil, it would have gone hard with me! He set apart thy inheritance, even the dwelling and thy portion of the land, to thy son Talmai and his mother."

Thus humbly did Hilwe speak of herself.

"And the lad Talmai — where is he? Where doth he abide?"

Now Talmai had hidden behind his mother's skirts, and was stealthily peeping with widely staring eyes at the great man who was his father.

"He is even here, nigh at hand," answered Hilwe.

Thereupon she reached behind her, and drew the boy forth into view.

"Be not afraid," she said to him. "He is thy father."

As Hassan's eyes fell upon Talmai, a glad, proud glance flashed from them. His heart beat fast, and he visibly trembled. All the force of the father's nature was moved within him, and he yearned towards his son. His own image in miniature was before him.

"Allah be praised, he is indeed my son!" he said.

He stretched out his arms.

"Come!"

Looking half steadfastly, half questioningly, in his face, the boy went to him.

Hassan caught him to him, and kissed him; and, lifting him on high, set him astride his shoulder.

He passed his hand over the boy's hair and face, and down his limbs, feeling him, as one who loved him; but he uttered not a syllable, though he strove to speak; for he could not for his emotion.

As for Talmai, he made free with him, clutched him round the neck, and tugged at his moustache, now grown to formidable dimensions.

Poor, patient Hilwe, in her painful gladness, choked back a sob and smiled.

Just then a soldier of Hassan's regiment came up. It was the faithful Chalîl.

Hassan turned towards him.

"Behold my son!" he said.

"He is thy living image," exclaimed his friend.

"Yea. It is the face I saw in the water, when, as a lad, I bathed in the 'great pools' of Suleyman the Wise."

And so, for awhile, they talked together of the times that were gone.

"I have seen my father," said Chalîl, with glad voice.

"Thou sayest!" exclaimed Hassan. "And how is the honoured sheik?"

"He is well, and inquireth for thee."

"Make my salaams to him. I shall see him soon."

Then, as Chalîl left, Hilwe went to take the boy; but Hassan would not give him up, and playfully resisted.

"Nay, give him to me," she said.

"Is he not the son of my strength?" was his exultant speech.

"Is he not the son of my sorrow?" she said. "Have I not well-nigh given my life for him?"

Hassan listened attentively while she told of it, and her sad experience; but he spoke not a word, good or

bad. It smote his lips dumb as he thought of how far he had been from her in her hour of need. Then came the added pang as he remembered how he had misjudged her; and he groaned in spirit. His heart was full to overflowing.

At last it was night, and they were alone together. But even yet Hilwe could not believe the exceeding joy which encompassed her, and which she seemed unable to reach. It was too much. She scarcely dared to look up at the big and gallant soldier who had come to her, and who was like unto a stranger. She feared while she loved him. And when the handsome giant took her in his arms and drew her to him, she hid her face against his fine uniform, as one that is ashamed, and was as a slender reed that is shaken by the wind.

"Hilwe, my beloved," he said, "rememberest thou not the days that are past — when we wandered together on the hillside, in the sweet free air, and the brightness of the heavens was round about us?"

"Yes," she answered softly. "How could I forget?"

"Shall it not be so again?"

When they thus had spoken, and he reassured her, and kissed her, she knew he was the same Hassan who had always loved her; and she believed him when he told her that now he loved her more than ever — as never before.

"I shall always abide with thee, and cleave unto thee," he said, with the unabashed openness of the brave and innocent man. "Are we not one flesh? No one, except Allah and the children he giveth unto us, shall share my love with thee."

O blessed and holy sacrament of married love! Glory be to the Divine Name that He has left us this one relic of happiness and of Eden! Let us adore Him through this beautiful ordinance, established by Himself from the beginning, throughout all creation, as a means of grace and the inheritance of eternal life!

It is a great thing to be loved, a greater still to love, — but the greatest of all is when, these two being united,

we go on our way, loving and loved, marching to the sweet and holy music of the spheres, all life a light and a joy.

The life at Bettîr — how simple it was! — in some respects, simple almost to savagery in its naturalness! But it is the simple things that make foolish and confound the wisdom of the great.

How proudly the old sheik Abou Chalîl gave Hassan and Hilwe his blessing! And the long-deferred marriage-feast was held with all the village pomp and ancient ceremonies and customs, dear to the peasant heart; and there was much rejoicing as they brought the man and woman home.

CHAPTER LVI

KIAMIL AGA, that wayward and flagrant officer of the zaptiehs, did not again trouble Bettîr or the hill-country, to which he had been as an avenging angel.

This was not due to any change of heart on his part, but to the fact that he had obtained an appointment in Constantinople, whither he removed.

Whatever marks and disfigurements he bore on his elegant and well-nurtured body, the result of his humiliating and disgraceful fall at Hilwe's hands, he carefully concealed from every eye, so far as was possible. He himself hated to look at them, and he would gnash his teeth and rage when he happened to see them. Fortunately for him, the greater part of these blemishes were concealed beneath his clothes. A deep scar across his cheek, those who knew no better gave him the credit of having received in battle. The slight limp, his chief mortification, he learned to manage with great skill, so that it was barely perceptible.

It was said his general health had been permanently

injured. But, if so, there certainly was no marked evidence of it apparent after the first year of his convalescence.

For a time he went about with a rather subdued air; but inwardly the fires of wrath consumed him; and it was certain his unfortunate experience had far other than a holy influence upon him.

His removal to Constantinople, however, prevented any open demonstration of his feelings in the shape of what might be considered revenge.

Once in the City of the Sultan, he gave loose to the pursuits and pleasures congenial to such a nature as his, consorting with a class of young men who were notorious for their free living. He considered he had never before known what life really was worth, and counted his previous years, in comparison, as wasted.

In an evil hour he was led into one of those palace intrigues which have cost so many men their liberty or their lives. His sin was an unforgivable one. Being discovered, his only safety lay in flight; and he barely succeeded in escaping across the frontier.

He had thus reaped the legitimate consequences of his acts. For a momentary gratification, he had destroyed all his prospects of success under the Ottoman government.

After this he led a desultory life in some of the chief cities of Europe. His downward course was rapid. But even in Constantinople he had made himself scandalous long before his final escapade.

"There goes the lascivious Turk in all his unconscious enormity," said an English gentleman, one day, on seeing Kiamil pass, and speaking generically as well as individually. "Poor fellow, he is made out to be far worse than he is; and, God knows, he has sins enough and to spare. But give a dog a bad name, and you know how it is. No one has a good word to say for him. Battening in lust, and knowing no evil in it — yea, rather the supreme good, for he makes his heaven of it — the accusation is, not that the Turk is sensual and that he is licentious, for that can be said of many other peoples, but that he professedly lives in

this condition, does not rise above it, is subordinated to it, and, with his peculiar ineptitude, can find no deliverance from it. There are physical reasons connected with this. It could not be otherwise than as it is, they say. He generally is well made and, so far as the animal goes, a man in the fullest sense. Nor is he wanting in courage. Often handsome, he is not seldom agreeable and even attractive in a certain way. But the way is not an exalted one. With all this, it would be strange how much he makes you like him, did we not know that, in secret, most men have leanings that make them palliate the natural sins, and give them a fellow-feeling for the sinner."

To this might be added, *en passant*, that, naturally polite himself, courtesy and politeness go a great way with the Turk. But in political and diplomatic affairs, the hand of iron in the glove of velvet that the Emperor Charles V. was so fond of recommending, seems to be the exact thing to meet the case.

The most easy people in the world to manage are the Turks; and therefore you must take all the more care that somebody else is not managing them, while you think you are doing so.

In the course of his wanderings, Kiamil had drifted into the great city of Vienna, where he continued to lead the gay life he had known elsewhere, though now daily becoming more restricted from his reduced circumstances. His health, too, began to be seriously impaired. The wonder was that it had withstood so long the ravages of his wild career.

He had never done any hard work. His delicate hands showed that. How could he turn to labour for a living? Besides, his nature revolted from it.

Like all men of an ardent temperament, he had his reactive spells of melancholy and sadness; and sometimes, even in other days and in the midst of his happy thoughts, a touch of this might have been seen. But on the whole he bore his misfortunes patiently.

He finally had been obliged to take a room in one of the poorest quarters of the city — a wretched cage for so gay a bird. Everything of its furnishing was of the

most simple kind. It was simplicity measured by poverty. But now he was only too glad to have that, or a roof to cover his head. He was not altogether alone. An unfortunate girl, one of those tall blonde Viennese, with hair like spun gold, whose acquaintance he had early made on his arrival in the Austrian capital, came occasionally to minister to him in his sickness. He seemed to retain a certain attraction for her; and, to some extent, she had become attached to him. Perhaps his dark complexion with his large expressive eyes, of that rich deep brown that in shadow appears to be black, presented the extreme contrast to herself that appealed to her nature and satisfied her. Certain it was she came as often as she possibly could to see him, bringing him such little dainties as her slim and irregularly-supplied purse permitted.

Toward the close it went hard with him. One could scarce help sympathising with him, he was in so sore a strait. Satan himself would have pitied him. But the fallen man, wretched as was his state, murmured not.

"Kismet," he would say. "Life is a strange thing. How little we know about it! It is too short. Too short to do much with, anyway — either bad or good. I tried to be happy. That was all. If that is a sin, I cannot help it. Why was I made that way? Why did I so greatly desire the joys of life? When I came into the world I did n't know anything about the event; nor had I any choice in the matter. And when I go out of the world, it is probable I shall know but little about it, either."

Then there came a decided change for the worse in his condition.

"Your heart is affected," they told him.

"No wonder," he said.

It was the quenching of the fire. The eyes had the dull listless look of the man's who has lost hope — who has no more expectation of living again the passionate joyous moments that once flooded his veins with the warm exaltation of life.

He did not want to believe it — he could not bear to

think it — to accept the dreadful assertion that Nature had made in such blunt unvarnished terms. Yet it was too true. Not all the warm love-breath in the world could again kindle the dying embers to their wonted glow, or satisfy the most moderate demand of the retrenching spendthrift — the once prodigal votary of pleasure. Soon the last remnant of heat would depart, and nothing but a pitiful handful of cold, bitter, gray ashes upon the high altar would be left to denote the spot where passion's fires had burned — where such lavish sacrifices to Eros had been offered,

He was poverty-stricken. The authorities, having had the case brought to their notice, investigated it, and had him removed to the great and celebrated hospital, — with its thousands of beds, and obliteration of the individual, — so long the pride of the fair metropolis. How often, in passing, he had noticed the quaint old-fashioned pile of buildings with its multitudinous windows, little thinking, in his day of strength, that he ever should be an inmate of it!

Here he completely lost his identity. He had long passed under an assumed name, and now, being removed in the absence of the girl who, from loving devotion, had done what she could for him, he disappeared from sight, as if already entombed. The girl's own illness had prevented her visiting him for several days; and he lay helpless in a miserable state of neglect and want when the officers appeared upon the scene.

"Pleasure and suffering — suffering and pleasure — they are all one," he said. "Life becomes so mauled and beaten out, it is numb to any ordinary sensation. I do not know whether it is more pain to experience pleasure, than pleasure to endure pain. It has come to that with me. I get quite confused about it. There, too, is such a thing as one kind of pain being a relief from another kind from which we have long suffered. But I believe I have passed beyond that."

His life was ebbing fast. He now knew he had not long to live. Without, the daylight was dying upon the hills he never more should see. He was going out with the day. His feet should never again carry him into

the places they had been wont to frequent. All that was over with him. The night was coming on. The strong, arrogant young man was weak and helpless enough now. The proud head was laid low; the eagerly responsive pulses were quieted, and presently would be stilled forever. It was difficult to believe that one lately so full of warm life and intense feeling would soon be no better than a clod of the valley.

It happened that, the very next day, the Englishman who, several months before, had made the remarks about Kiamil and the Turks, and who was still sojourning in Vienna, was taken by a medical friend to see the great hospital, which, with certain restrictions, is one of the show places of the city. As an unusual privilege, he was admitted to the vaults beneath, where the unclaimed dead bodies, reserved for dissection — subjects who had just died in the hospital — are all laid out, naked as they were born, upon the broad range of stone slabs that occupy one side of the space. The bodies are nameless, each only designated by a number, or as such or such a case, referring to the disease of which he had died. Kiamil was among them.

The water slowly and noiselessly trickles over the slanting slabs. The atmosphere is sepulchral. All language is frozen to silence in the place.

"Poor humanity, everything that once made it desirable and beautiful, gone," thought the healthy Englishman. And as he turned away he could not escape the impression the grim scene conveyed. He carried it with him. It was photographed in his mind.

As he reached the street, and was once more laved by the sunshine and the wholesome air, what a relief and comfort he felt it. It was like a purification.

"To-day I have seen the end of man and his history, written in some of the most revolting forms," he mused. "Knowing what poor man is, and knowing, even in our feeble way, the eternal and almighty majesty of God, I can but say: 'How can He be angry with His creature that he has made?' I have heard with the inner ear the poor dead lips that can nevermore speak, but are fast turning to corruption — I have heard them cry out:

'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' Where is the room for vengeance? Poor fellows, laid out, cold and passionless enough now, ready for the dissecting knife, the pleasure, such as they knew it, all taken out of them. And yet once a mother and a sister bent above and kissed those lips, and a dearer one still pressed them in heart-expanding love. But their smile is gone forever; and they have become repulsive to all, no matter how warm with life and fascination they once were. Ah, how pitiful! — In the presence of all this, how strangely cruel sounds — 'After death the judgment.'"

By one of those coincidences which we call strange only because we do not hear of them oftener, at the moment when the hapless soul of the Osmanli was scourged from the body in which he had done his sultry will, so far as he could, — in a quiet rectory in England, an old mansion with ivied walls and chimneys, surrounded with sweet-scented sloping lawns, smooth and pleasant, and embosomed in umbrageous foliage of trees many centuries old, and within sound of the cathedral bells beneath which he had so long ministered, Canon Stanhope was breathing his last. The cooing of doves and cawing of rooks gave a pensive flavour to the atmosphere of the place. All was peace, peace, as it can be in no other country in the world — in no other country this side of heaven.

Except for the change wrought by his illness, the revered ecclesiastic was not greatly altered in his general appearance, but looked very much as he had done that day in Jerusalem, when he and his daughter purchased the flowers from Hilwe and Amne, and the vain young captain of zaptiehs acted as interpreter for them. It was the one point — the only one in their lives — where that son of passion and the saintly Anglican had met and touched. Never again, as never before, had their eyes met, their hands clasped, or their voices sounded in each other's ears. And now they were giving up the ghost at the same moment of time. Such is fate.

The peace that passeth understanding filled the can-

on's mind. His fair daughter, leaning over the man of God, smoothed his pillow. The tears poured down her face, and she could not restrain her sobs. He raised his handkerchief, and wiped the tears away.

"Weep not," he said. "I am going home, to my Father, and your Father — to my God, and your God. Have I not here been a stranger and a sojourner, as all my fathers were?"

He spoke in a low voice, but it was full of feeling.

"It is the end," he continued; "the end of this life — the beginning of another."

Suddenly he roused himself, and with surprising energy repeated the first clauses of the "Te Deum" — that grand, exultant hymn of the Church — commencing in a full impassioned voice, which gathered strength as he proceeded: "We praise thee, O God! We acknowledge thee to be the Lord! All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting!" and ending with the glorious acclamation: "Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory!"

He ceased; his breath was failing. Willing as was the spirit, the flesh was weak.

"Yes, it is the end here," he said. "I go whence I came. I return to Him of whom I am. There is no Heaven but in him. To be in him is Heaven."

Again his voice faltered. This time it was for several moments.

"And the body — the body — ah, the poor body that we thought so much of!"

A sublime pity shone in his face as he looked down on the clay he was deserting; but this was absorbed in a higher glow, a suffusion of intenser light, as, in the passing of the soul, he spoke with his last breath the words:

"One with Thee!"

Those who beheld and heard said there was no doubt that he had awoke with His likeness, and was satisfied.

That dear old face, grand with its original racial strength and intellectual endowment, had something more than these, — the triumphant joy of a conqueror, with the peace the world cannot give or take away.

He had repeated the "Te Deum" so often, the heavenly grace and beauty of it had passed into him, his people said, and had moulded the lines of his countenance, and breathed out of his every feature, till his face was a sermon.

It was well with him.

CHAPTER LVII

NONE of Hilwe's friends were more delighted at her good fortune and her deliverance from the hands of those that hated her than was Kadra, the wise woman of Malha.

"Thou hast been highly favoured, Hilwe," was her salutation, on first meeting her, after Hassan's return. "It will be better in the end for thee than at the beginning. Did we not know that good luck is not sold in the market, we might inquire of thee as to the city in which thou hast purchased the rare commodity, and the merchant who keeps such a stock-in-trade, that we might get a supply."

Hilwe understood Kadra too well not to know that this sally of hers was intended simply to draw a return in kind.

"Ah! Indeed, Kadra, is it not rather to thee we must go for such information? Have I not heard of all the wonderful things which have happened to thee? But we desire to know them from thine own lips."

This was sufficient to open the mouth of the wise woman; and a flood of personal relation followed. Yet she commenced in a deprecatory tone.

"Doubtless they have told thee more than the truth," she said. "They have made much out of a small thing. In the ant's house a little dew makes a deluge. What is my good fortune to thine? Is it not as an acorn to an oak? Yet, though the cook is not to be mentioned in the same breath with the master, and is not thought of by the guests at the great feast, and is excused from paying compliments and respects to them, does not that

same cook get the first taste of everything? Mayhap it is so with me. I will not deny the benefits that have come to me. It is they who cannot dance complain that the floor is uneven."

No doubt she had much to tell of, and that of a surprising nature. And who could tell it to equal her?

Hassan and Hilwe had heard the various rumours as they went flying, hither and thither, with the usual embellishments of the natives, — but to have the full and true account from Kadra, the chief personage in the drama, was something worth boasting of.

The sum and substance of the highly-wrought narrative amounted to this: Kadra had made her third matrimonial venture. She was now the fourth living wife of no less a man than Abd-el-nour.

This had been brought about by much diplomacy — nice and cunning work, such as the native is an adept in, and necessary to be doubly skilful when employed in such a case, with so old a bird as Abd-el-nour, whose common vaunt was that he was not to be caught with chaff.

Kadra's house was filled with valuables lent by relatives and friends who were in the plot, and directly or indirectly interested. Abd-el-nour, with the greatest secrecy and caution, was allowed to get a furtive peep at this goodly store. He was also informed of an immense buried treasure in silver, belonging to the widow, the accumulation of many years, and the result of her former marriages. All this, and much more unnecessary to describe, set the ball rolling. Not a word hinting at matrimony was mentioned. Other suitors, younger men than Abd-el-nour, were introduced upon the scene, to stimulate him. It was enough. His cupidity was excited. The necessary "go-between" finished the business, Kadra "holding off" and not consenting till she had everything as she wished it.

Besides a large sum paid down by the bridegroom, there was from the friends on both sides a handsome display of bridal gifts including money. The amounts called out by the crier or announcer at the marriage were fraudulently quadrupled by him, so that Abd-el-nour

congratulated himself as having done an uncommonly good thing, even better than he expected. Most of the gifts presented by Kadra's relatives were, according to private agreement, well understood, carefully returned after the ceremony. But Kadra managed everything, including Abd-el-nour, so well, nothing wrong was imagined by him.

In consideration of the suppositious wealth she brought him, she was advanced to be his favourite wife; and, presently, she succeeded in getting him so completely in hand that her word was law with him. He felt a pressure somewhere, but hardly knew what it meant. The other wives saw their interest lay in uniting with her against one who had been a tyrant to them. Among the four confederate women he was helpless; and when he awoke to the recognition of the situation, he found he was too old and feeble to deliver himself. He had earned the hatred and contempt of the village. The combination, within and without, was too strong for him. It was useless to fight against it.

Kadra used her power judiciously, if not mercifully. She especially espoused the cause of poor despised Nigme, who had been the wife of Abd-el-nour's youth, and the mother of his children. The latter had died in their infancy, which was one reason for his cruel ill-treatment of her. But the chief cause of his resentment against her was that Nigme, who, in spite of everything, had continued to love him from the first, in order to gain his affection had recourse to the use of the love philtre.

The black stone, regarded as so effectual in the case of unrequited love, is also considered, in some degree, poisonous. Such stones are exceedingly rare. The one in question was kept by an old woman, who gained a good livelihood from it. It was highly valued, and only lent on the deposit of a round sum of money.

On procuring the potent antidote, which was to restore to her the love of her youth, Nigme, grinding the stone on a piece of pottery, mixed the resultant powder in milk, and gave it to Abd-el-nour to drink.

It almost killed him, but seemed to produce the

desired result. This being perceived by the wife against whom the spell was used, she had recourse to the same remedy, which was disastrous and well-nigh fatal in its effects on Abd-el-nour.

Suspecting the origin of his peculiar sickness, he obliged the women to confess what they had done, and soon all was brought to light.

Instead of earning his love, they had gained his unmitigated hatred, which was principally exercised against Nigme, from whom he considered better might have been expected.

"Cursed be thou!" he yelled, in his spasms of pain. "As I live, I shall divorce thee. Many a man has divorced his wife for far less — even for spoiling his coffee."

But Kadra soon brought the exercise of this hostility to an end. She also insisted on his returning to Nigme her dowry headdress and necklace of bishliks, the most precious possession of the wife, of which, contrary to custom and traditional law, he had deprived her.

It was an inexpressible pleasure to the poor despised creature to wear once more those invaluable ornaments. But what humilation it was to Abd-el-nour!

He was receiving his well-deserved punishment, and lived in a constant torment of impotent rage at the plight into which he had fallen.

No one pitied him, unless it might be Nigme. He hated every one, and feared Kadra.

Not a single detail of all this was forgotten to be dilated on by Kadra in her recital to Hassan and Hilwe.

The wise woman had now become a power in Malha, and an object of suit and service on every side, — which position, as we shall not have occasion to again mention her, we may state she continued to hold to the last. In her mastery of Abd-el-nour she found a congenial field for the display of her boasted contempt for the stronger sex.

As to Crosslett, otherwise known as St. George, it may be interesting to mention that, after his action connected with the rescue of Hilwe, he suddenly developed

a more aggressive spirit in his proselytizing efforts, and, if possible, was more eccentric in his dress and manners; though, as hitherto, in general his demeanour was calm and quiet. But there were occasions when he could thunder like an Elijah, though there was no visible answer by fire.

He finally was drawn into trouble with the local authorities, through his distributing bibles in the Arabic language among Moslems, which is contrary to the Turkish law. As an American, the Turks had no power to arrest and try him. He had the privilege of being arrested, tried and sentenced by his consul, before whom he was summoned on the Turkish charges being duly presented.

It happened to be in the winter — bitter stormy weather, and Crosslett appeared at the consulate, in his scanty attire, with no covering for head, legs and feet. He was pierced with the cold, his lips blue, his flesh ashy pale. His poor cotton robe, wet with the rain, and stained with the clay of the fields in which he had been abiding, was scarcely sufficient to cover his nudity, and not at all sufficient to protect him from the cold. He was truly a sorry-looking figure — a sight to draw pity from a stone.

The consul was greatly shocked.

"Crosslett, you are killing yourself," he said.

But Crosslett did not look at it in this light.

"He that loseth his life shall find it," he said.

"You know how anxious your friends in the United States are that you should return to them," urged the consul.

"I have left all that behind," was the answer. "Are they not a froward and perverse generation, who have made filthy lucre their god?"

When the charges were read to him, Crosslett admitted they were true. But when it was agreed to withdraw the complaint on his promising to comply with the law in future, he refused to make such a compact, declaring it was against his conscience.

His defence was:

"I am only bringing back to you the book you gave

to us. It was written in this country. The voice is your Father's voice. I am returning to you the sacred writings which we had of you, and am determined to preach to you The Christ."

He spoke so beautifully, the holy fire burning upon his lips, that all who heard him were moved with compassion for him, and deeply impressed.

"Is he not like the Master?" said one, with tears in his eyes.

The sympathies of the consul were with him; and he discharged him under suspended sentence; but he felt it necessary to privately admonish him to be more careful in the future.

Shortly afterwards, Crosslett suddenly disappeared, and nothing was heard of him for more than a year. Then a letter was received from him by the consul, stating that he was in India, where, in connection with the missionaries, he had done some work which had been blessed to the natives.

As no further was heard of him, it was thought the earnest and guileless man met with his death at the hands of some of the fanatic tribesmen, with whom he had been seen. Thus he probably died a martyr to the cause.

The venerable Anselmo Jacobini is no more. He succumbed to a severe attack of Jerusalem fever, shortly after the return of Hassan. The murder of Amne and her son, which terrible act, with Leone's indirect connection with it, coming to his knowledge, affected him most distressingly, it was thought, hastened his end. But, as his death occurred so long afterward, surely the exhausting fever at his advanced age should sufficiently account for his sudden taking off.

The noble old Jew lies buried in that ancient necropolis of his race, on the Mount of Olives, the seared unlovely place where every orthodox Jew hankers to be buried, — of which he had once spoken so pathetically to the Rabbi Sloman, and which his windows, from the opposite heights, on the slopes of Mount Zion, completely overlooked, the abrupt gorge of the Valley of

the Cedron, like the Valley of the Shadow, running between. Latterly he had continually kept it in sight, expecting to be laid there.

It cannot be thought that the old Venetian Jew, in his desire to be interred in this most dismal of cemeteries had any of the superstitious dread which possesses so many of the Hebrews: that the Jew who is not buried there will, at the last day, be dragged beneath the earth, with fearful maulings and beatings, to the Mount of Olives. But his father had come here, to die and be buried on the Mount, and it is the universal longing of his people to be gathered there, in sight of the ancient Holy Place, with their ancestors.

That he had been disappointed with certain features of his people in the Holy City it would be useless to deny. Their obstructive fanaticism had been as provoking and injurious in the case of his benevolent intentions as it had been in that of Sir Moses Montefiore and others like him. Yet he did not forget Jerusalem or her people. Oh no!

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

With what a passion of regretful love he repeated those words, again and again, always ending with: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." His great disappointment had been his failure to bring abundant water into the city — a beneficence to which he had been so strongly urged by the American Consul. Though willing to subscribe munificently to this, he had not received the response his liberality and the importance of the design merited.

Besides the large amounts of money he had expended for various benevolent objects during his residence in the city, he bequeathed generous sums to be devoted to the elevation of the Jews in Palestine through the establishment of industrial enterprises, and the purchase of land for colonising purposes and the encouragement of agricultural pursuits. But the bulk of his wealth, which proved to be far beyond anything those best acquainted

with him had any idea of, he left to "my dear nephew, the Count Leone Spollato, of Naples, the only child of my beloved sister Rachele, and the last of the Jacobini family."

There was the old and picturesque family palace in Venice, on one of the smaller canals; and, in the midst of fine grounds, a castellated villa near Florence, which the French would call a château, or the Germans a schloss, each filled with costly furniture, and a valuable collection of works of art. He had brought only a comparatively small amount of his riches to Jerusalem. A large sum was banked in Venice, a still larger in Amsterdam, that city of Jewish bankers. But these were as nothing to the princely fortune, both in the form of gold and various valuable securities, deposited by him in the Bank of England, that safety-vault of the world, whose stability is based on its integrity, guarded by honour and wisdom, as the old man was never tired of saying. For he had a great respect for the English.

"They revere our sacred books," he said; "and they, long ago, have learned the secret of prosperity: that honesty is the best policy. Have they not honoured with the highest position men of our race? And in the glorious palace of their parliament have they not the representation of our great lawgiver descending from Mount Sinai, bearing the tables of the law?"

Leone was disgusted at the failure of all his efforts to bring the cowardly murderers of Amne and his son to justice. Arrests of those believed to be the culprits were of little use. He inveighed constantly against the supine, procrastinating Turkish government, as the cause of the trouble.

"Oh, the deceitfulness of the Orientals — their indolence and dilatoriness!" he exclaimed. "Yet it is astonishing how suddenly active and energetic they can become under some personal stimulus, as, for instance, some secret object or end, some piece of mischief or underhand villainy they may have in view."

Yet the authorities were not altogether to blame, and, for them, had been, in this case, unusually energetic. They could get no witnesses. The difficulty was with

the fellaheen who, residing in their strong point, evasion, would not tell the truth, or testify against one of themselves, no matter what the consequences.

It was a similar case to that of the lower order of the Irish, so like the peasantry of Palestine in many respects — yes, in a hundred characteristics and habits and ways: no matter how vile the criminal, they branded him with the honour-mark of their pseudo-patriotism; when, forthwith, he was a marytr to the cause, and they would die sooner than deliver him up to justice. To them, justice meant government; and order, law and government they hated and were against by their natural instincts.

Thinking that personal investigation might avail where other methods had failed, perhaps through the want of interest on the part of those intrusted with the case, Leone visited the accused in the Turkish prison in Jerusalem, determined to see for himself.

He was satisfied! — yes, satisfied of the difficulties in the case.

"Oh that most unique of jails!" he said, recalling the sight.

It seemed a pile of ancient ruins. The gate of iron bars was in an archway — a shallow recess, but slightly off the street; and on each side was a small guardhouse, not much larger than a sentry-box, built in the stone wall.

Approaching the gate, accompanied by his dragoman or interpreter, he stood and looked in. No objection was made. He saw the wide open court or space in the centre of the ruins, in which every prisoner was at large: the murderer in chains, the thief with ball attached to his leg, the petty offender, the disobedient son put in on the simple complaint of his father, all loose together, all in the one uncovered space — not the least attempt at separate or solitary confinement, scarcely an approach to classification of the criminal.

He saw the prisoners from Malha; he saw those in charge of them. His questions were answered politely, with the ease of accomplished prevaricators, and with such wonderful semblance to truth, though at total

variance to all he knew of the facts, that it staggered him.

He felt like a fool — an imbecile walking in a dream.

He had not stood long at the gate before he was perceived by the mass of the incarcerated. There was an immediate rush to the spot by the miserable wretches.

"Backsheesh! Backsheesh!"

What a clamour they raised! What a deafening din — an unholy yelping, as of mangy pariah dogs. Some begged for tobacco, others requested food, but the majority implored a little money. Even the smallest Turkish coin would be acceptable. It was like pandemonium made vocal, or a glimpse into Dante's hell. He was glad to escape it by beating a hasty retreat, — though he could not blot from his memory the sights he had beheld.

After this his dealings with the Turkish court had plainly reached a further unfavourable stage. His visit to the jail, and ineffectual efforts, no doubt had been duly reported. And though he was courteously received, he felt the wind had changed decidedly, and now blew from the opposite quarter.

He was suavely informed he had no reliable evidence. In Turkey you must not only provide witnesses in your law suit, but others who swear to the good character and credibility of the former: thus seeming to admit the frequency of perjury. Those willing to stoop to it can procure all these upon the street, with little trouble, for a comparatively small amount of money. The more doubtful the case, the more numerous the witnesses, and the more skilful are they in lying.

Finally he was told that not only could he not prove the murder of the supposed victims, but he could not establish the fact of their death. He had not been able to find their bodies. How could he tell that they were not living, hidden away somewhere?

He was quietly advised to let the matter drop. But this he refused to do.

A few days after, when walking in the street, he was surprised to see two of the Malha prisoners accompanied by a notorious murderer who had been pointed out

to him on his visit to the jail. They were unguarded, and were evidently walking about at their own free will.

On his expressing his astonishment at this, he was informed that it was no uncommon sight. And when he inquired why the murderer had not been executed, it was explained that in such cases capital punishment was not inflicted unless the criminal confessed to having committed the murder, no matter how conclusive the evidence against him might be. A term of imprisonment was usually the punishment imposed. In this case the guilty man had been condemned to thirteen years' confinement, which was the ordinary sentence.

It is scarcely necessary to add that Leone lost his case. In fact, it was thrown out, and the Malha prisoners were at once liberated.

Before passing from the subject, it would be unfair not to give the Turkish government credit for doing much, of late, to put a stop to the more barbarous methods of the Fellaheen and Bedawin in taking the law into their own hands — especially in such cases as that of Amne, and the scarcely less fearful crimes connected with retaliation, and known as the Thar or blood-feud. On learning of the likelihood of there being any such acts of violence at a place, the authorities see that troops are sent to the spot, arrests made, and the people impressed with the fact that the power of inflicting punishment of the sort referred to is the prerogative of the government, and the usurpation of it a serious offence against the law.

Leone had done what he could to bring the murderers to justice. He was told on all sides that further attempts on his part would be useless. With the attitude of the peasantry upon the subject, conviction of the actors in the bloody crime would be impossible.

Now that his uncle was dead and his affairs in the Holy City wound up, Leone had no further cause for detention in Jerusalem, which had grown more and more distasteful to him. It was with a sense of relief he took his departure from it.

Selim had expressed a strong desire to accompany him, as body servant, or in any other capacity. But Leone resisted the warm appeal of the subtle Oriental.

Perhaps it was with the feeling that, at least for awhile, he wished to escape the entire atmosphere of the East, and that he did not care to have about him a continual reminder of Jerusalem. Leone pacified the devoted servitor with a generous gift, and the promise that, possibly, after a time, he would send for him. It was only a half-promise; but Selim had to be satisfied with it.

Matters connected with the Jacobini estate in Venice, Amsterdam and London urgently demanded Leone's attention and presence. As his more important business lay in London, he made but a short stay in each of the two former cities, purposing to return to the continent.

With the intention of submitting the contents to the specialists of the British Museum, he brought with him the antique coffer containing the invaluable documents and relics of the Jacobini family, which had been cherished with such affection and reverence by his forefathers, and which his uncle with such strict injunctions had delivered into his hands.

"Yes; I shall have the opinion of the savants of the world upon them, if necessary, to determine and establish the truth about them," he said. "It is the least I can do, in grateful memory of my uncle Anselmo."

As he stood upon the deck of the steamer bound for England and the great fortune awaiting him there, it would have been strange had he not indulged in some of the dreams and anticipations natural to the young man with the best part of his life yet to live, and so favourable a future opening before him. But if any unworthy feelings occupied him, and if he felt impatient at delays, and restive at the memory of what had been unhappy or unpleasant in his recent years, he was not without kindlier and more generous sentiments as he looked forward, and thought of his meeting with his uncle Giovanni in Naples, and the glad surprise and proud relief the change in his fortunes would bring the noble old man. For he had determined, on completing his business in London, to return to his home in Naples.

The weather had been threatening, and, toward the close of the day, the wind, which had already raised a heavy sea, increased in violence, and began to blow a

gale. It was one of those terrific storms which, like a rampant dragon of the deep, haunt the English coast, and render so formidable the approaches, and the navigation of the seas surrounding the "fortunate island." The vessel went lumbering onward uneasily through the darkness that gathered with the tempest, and now was in great danger, as the guiding and warning lights on shore had been blotted out.

All the night long the heavy seas broke upon the island beaches with sullen steady moan, shaking the bastion rocks to their foundations. The stars were extinguished; and there was a horrible impenetrable blackness upon the waste of waters, as if the spirit of God had never moved upon the face of the deep. The sharp rain, with the hiss of a demon, swept headlong through the boundless spaces of the chaos to mingle with the briny spray hurled from the half-formed crests of the toppling waves that continually lifted themselves with angry menace. One would say that nothing could live before them, they would overwhelm the stoutest craft, and all the power of man be but weakness in their presence — like a pigmy contending with a giant. At times the force of the gale gave it the character of a hurricane. A blind relentless power, yet with the determination of fate, what might not be possible to it? Men's hearts failed them as they ploughed through the turbulent vortex — the hell-broth, knowing not what would come next, and expecting to be swallowed up the succeeding moment. Out in the Channel there were many disasters and wrecks; and many a brave soul was stricken from the body that night.

While it was yet dark, the news flashed from a small fishing village to a near life-station that a large steamer was ashore upon the rocks and was fast breaking up. It was the vessel upon which Leone was travelling.

"This is a time when money avails but little," he said. "All my wealth is as nothing in such a crisis!"

"If we can only hold together till help comes!" was the captain's constant thought.

It was an experience to try men's souls, — that long anxious waiting in the darkness and the storm. But

with the first streak of dawn the lifeboat was alongside. Communication had been established with the shore, and the work of rescue commenced, Leone being among those on board who rendered the most valuable assistance. Perfect order prevailed; and not a man left the ship till every woman was safely landed.

It is unnecessary to enter into details. Though not a life was lost, scarcely anything else was saved. The precious coffer containing the Jacobini relics was sunk in the bottom of the Channel, — that vast treasure-house of untold loss, — never to be recovered.

Leone recalled the words of his uncle Anselmo as to the fatality pertaining to the Davidic dynasty and all connected with it. And though he spent much time and money in attempts to recover the coffer, which were unsuccessful, he comforted himself with the thought that, perhaps, it was as well that it was lost, as it might have proved a fatal gift. Men less superstitious than he might have believed its unhappy influence was manifested in the shipwreck. And though he did not go quite so far as that, yet his feelings on the subject certainly lessened his regret at a loss which, well-nigh, would have broken the heart of Anselmo Jacobini.

Leone gave expression to his better feelings in a more wholesome way — in the bestowal of a generous donation upon those who had lost their all in the disaster.

The varied experiences through which lately he had passed could not but impress him deeply. They had left an indelible mark upon him for the rest of his life. Those who knew him intimately said he was a sadder man, more thoughtful and more kind.

It would have cost him much to have spoken the word "Amne." But he could not help thinking all that word meant. That was his burden.

It was a happy day for Leone, when he once more stood within the home of his boyhood, — his uncle Giovanni's house, which some would call a palace, in his beloved Naples.

It was with difficulty he made the grand old count comprehend the immense value of the Jacobini estate,

of which he, Leone, had now become possessed. His uncle had told him with heartfelt pride that, at last, through much exertion and careful saving, together with a fortunate investment, he had been able, in some degree, to attain the great object of his latter years — to restore the former honour and standing of the old Spollato family.

"Even now," he said, "you would be able to keep your own carriage and horses on the Corso, equal to any of them. Doubtless the Jacobini money will go to help a little," he suggested indifferently. "All my hope is in you, Leone, to build up the family name," he resumed with warmth. "And I look to your making a distinguished alliance. You must! Indeed you must!"

Leone, at first, could not bear to explain all, — the proud old man was so exultant over what he had achieved. The young count gently chided him for his self-sacrifice, telling him that his beloved nephew was totally unworthy of the least part of his goodness.

"Nay, nay; it is as nothing," replied his uncle. "Do I not know there are many noble families, this day, in Italy who rent the front of their palaces, and live in the rear rooms on polenta and macaroni, that they may be able to keep their carriage and horses on the Corso?"

When, at last, Leone told him all, great was his uncle's amazement and delight.

"Who could imagine it?" he exclaimed. "The Jacobinis always lived so modestly — so plainly. How could they have accumulated so quietly all this wealth? But remember, Leone," he added, "it carries with it a great obligation."

During the fashionable season, the Spollato carriage, the family arms surmounted with a coronet upon the panels, was, once more, a well-known object upon the Corso Vittorio Emanuele in Naples, — one of the most enchantingly beautiful drives in the world. Within the carriage generally might be seen uncle and nephew, in affectionate companionship.

CHAPTER LVIII

WHEN Count Leone Spollato was about leaving the Holy City and Palestine, there was, perhaps, none of the many penitent and generous acts of which he was the author that gave him more satisfaction than his presenting the noble steed Al Borak to Hassan. It was a beautiful, a friendly, and a righteous thing to do.

"Has he not paid me back, a thousand times over, the paltry sum I gave for him?" said Leone, when Hassan remonstrated, saying he had taken a price, even money for the horse, and could not take him back. "But if you will not have him at my hand, then I shall give him to Hilwe and Talmai, whose lives he saved. There is none other to give him to, — none who love him as you all do."

Hassan, while thanking Leone, felt the gift too costly.

"Will you not let me have this gratification?" impetuously demanded Leone. "Do not thank me. Do you not know that it gives me greater pleasure to see you happy than to be happy in myself through some selfish indulgence? Oh, that the world would only know that the supreme joy is to drink happiness through the lips of another. It took me long to find it out."

After this, Hassan was obliged to give way.

The faithful horse knew his old stable, and loved it better far than the finer habitations he had lodged in since leaving Bettîr. Perhaps he felt that, next to the desert, it was more distinctively home.

It was, indeed, a goodly sight to see the old sheik, Abou Chalîl mounted upon the horse, Hassan walking on one side, Chalîl, the young sheik, on the other, — as they passed through the gate of Bettîr, every one who sat there, young and old, rising up to do the patriarch — the "father of his people" — reverence. Great was the pride of the villagers in the horse; and they were never tired of repeating that he was descended from the charger of the Prophet, and did honour to Bettîr.

The days and the years pass swiftly yet quietly, and free from exciting events, at Bettîr. Chalîl, who, with the veneration of the true worshipper, always hid in his heart his great and hopeless love for Hilwe, at last satisfied the sheik, and comforted himself by taking to wife one of the fairest maidens of Bettîr. She was chosen for him by his father, who longed to see his son's children before he died, in which the old man, in due time, was fully gratified. But the love of Hassan and Chalîl remained, the love passing the love of women.

Hassan, who is now the father of a second son, is the scribe and learned man of the village, who keeps the accounts, and so well, that the oppressive tax collectors cannot impose upon the people. All who have any grievance or dispute come to him to settle the trouble, or to get his advice. Occasionally even some one from Malha comes. And this duty he freely renders. Only that he always, in anything of importance, refers the matter to the venerable sheik, duly honouring him.

When the day's labour is done, the favourite place of meeting for social converse is before Hassan's house. Here the sheik and Chalîl, with the women and children, often come.

Frequently, at the peaceful hour, Hassan reads from some book to the villagers, or tells them some flowery story of ancient times or out of his own experience, than which nothing gives them greater delight.

The evening of a bright day is closing down upon the family group gathered before Hassan's door. Hilwe, patient, sweet and beautiful as ever, and her children are there; and the sheik, with Chalîl and his wife and first child, are given the places of honour. Hassan, again in the garments of the country, is entertaining them as host. Through the open doorway a glimpse of the interior of the house is had, showing the famous leopard-skin spread upon the floor. Hilwe takes good care of that skin. No boot or shoe treads upon it — only the uncovered foot touches it. The soft violet tones that pensive Nature loves so well are moderating and subduing the colours of tree and earth, sky and water, and multi-

plying shadows and picturesque effects. Back of all, in magnificent contrast, high against the firmament of fading blue, a mass of flame-coloured cloud, like a vast mountain range, is catching the last gold-and-crimson glory of the sunset, holding itself proudly aloft, like a Himalayan summit. The gray and brown rocky tells of Bettîr are lifted high against it as if trying to scale the greater eminence; but they still are far below, wrapped in shade.

In the midst Hassan sits and reads. And as he rolls off the Arabic, in his deep voice, he reverently bows his head, almost at every word, after the habit of the country when any sacred writing is read. How musically sonorous, so different from the ordinary reader, pour the tones from that rich bass throat. It is the voice of a whole-souled man.

These are the translated words:

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Hassan paused; he knew the passage well; and the sheik, who was listening intently, leaned forward to speak.

"The words are pleasant and good," he said. "Read it again, Hassan."

And Hassan read it again.

"Read it the third time."

Hassan read it the third time. And ever the words sounded grander, and sweeter, and more blessed. Had he read it a hundred times, it would have been the same.

"Is it not like unto Bettîr?" said the sheik.

"Yea, it is like unto Bettîr, only it is far better than Bettîr. It is the heavenly Paradise."

Hassan, thus replying, read on further:

"There shall be no more curse. . . . They shall see his face. . . . There shall be no night there. . . . And they shall reign for ever and ever."

He ended with the impressive blessing.

It was the utterance of a banished man, shut out from the world and his kind, and face to face with his Maker — the testimony of the beloved disciple John, who had leaned on the bosom of Jesus. It was the ancient inspiration — the voice of the land. How could it help but touch the people of the land?

"Now praise be to Allah that I have heard those glorious words!" said the sheik. "They are a comfort to my soul against the day, which is nigh at hand, when I shall be gathered to my fathers."

The twilight was deepening. Hassan had closed the book. But the sheik pondered. He had many questions to ask. So had the others.

"Where didst thou get the precious writing, Hassan?" inquired the sheik. "How didst thou come by it?"

"Ah!" quoth Hassan meditatively, "I shall tell thee: I have had the book a long time. I kept it hidden in a space between the stones in the wall of the house. It was there when they made soldiers of Chalîl and me, and carried us out of the country. And I found it, on my return, even as I had left it. When I was a lad, and went as dragoman to Jaffa, it was given me by an English lady from Ireland — at least she spoke English. She healed the sick, helped the needy, and brought to all in Jaffa words of peace — 'glad tidings of great joy' she called them. Her name? Ah, do I not remember it! It was Mangan. She was like an angel. They called her, as well they might, 'Our bright-faced lady.' Oh, was she not a gracious lady! Her face was as the sunshine of God."

And so the voices ran on, in murmurous parley, suited to the darkening hour, and mingling dreamily in one harmonious melody with the crisping rush of the water in the near-by aqueduct. For, as Hassan had said, "there is much water at Bettîr. Thou hast not to go far to draw it."

Thus Hassan sat beneath his own vine and fig-tree — unashamed, contented, happy with Hilwe and his children. Little did he reck that he was a descendant of

the ancient princes of the land, — at heart always a shepherd.

"I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth," saith Solomon.

The simple story is told. Why should more words be spent upon it? Though there is no end to what might be said of the land called "Holy."

It is like the blowing of the wind over the face of the deep, or the passing of the clouds over the changeless blue of the sky, or the stalking of the shadow across miles of mountain. The background is unaltered, and remains inviolate.

The incidents — the waves raised by the breezes of circumstance and occasion — have settled back into the calm level of the sea whence they had arisen. And all is well; for God lives.

THE END.

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